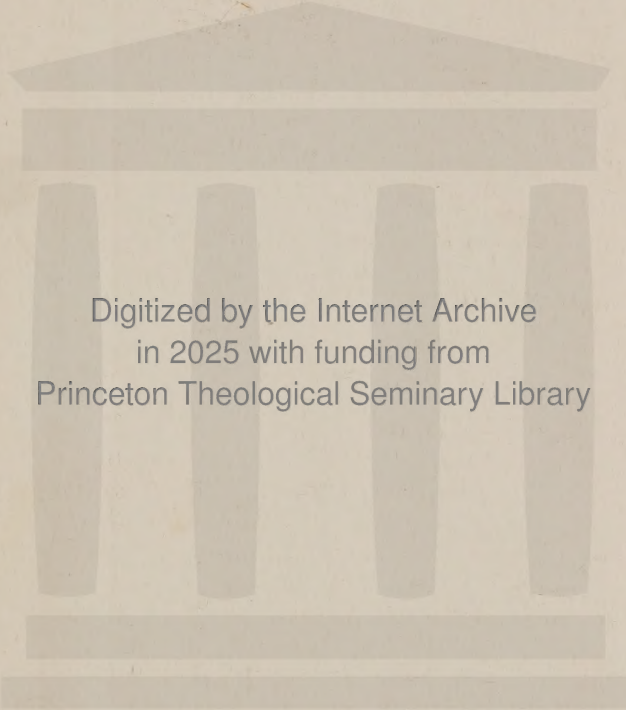
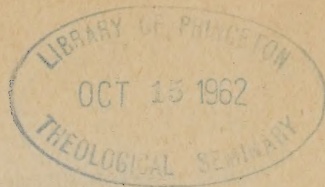


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EXPOSITIONS
of
HOLY SCRIPTURE

✓ by

ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D., Litt.D.

Volume 7

Gospel of St. John

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
Grand Rapids 1959 Michigan

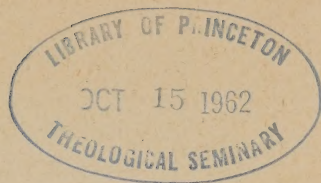
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EXPOSITIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D., Litt. D.

ST. JOHN

Chaps. I to VIII

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THE WORD IN ETERNITY, IN THE WORLD, AND IN THE FLESH

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. The same was in the beginning with God. 3. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. 4. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. 11. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. 12. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: 13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.'—JOHN I. 1-14.

THE other Gospels begin with Bethlehem; John begins with 'the bosom of the Father.' Luke dates his narrative by Roman emperors and Jewish high-priests; John dates his 'in the beginning.' To attempt adequate exposition of these verses in our narrow limits is absurd; we can only note the salient points of this, the profoundest page in the New Testament.

The threefold utterance in verse 1 carries us into the depths of eternity, before time or creatures were. Genesis and John both start from 'the beginning,' but, while Genesis works downwards from that point and tells what followed, John works upwards and tells what preceded—*if we may use that term in speaking of what lies beyond time*—time and creatures came into being, and, when they began, the Word 'was.' Surely no form of speech could more emphatically

declare absolute, uncreated being, outside the limits of time. Clearly, too, no interpretation of these words fathoms their depth, or makes worthy sense, which does not recognise that the Word is a person. The second clause of verse 1 asserts the eternal communion of the Word with God. The preposition employed means accurately 'towards,' and expresses the thought that in the Word there was motion or tendency towards, and not merely association with, God. It points to reciprocal, conscious communion, and the active going out of love in the direction of God. The last clause asserts the community of essence, which is not inconsistent with distinction of persons, and makes the communion of active Love possible; for none could, in the depths of eternity, dwell with and perfectly love and be loved by God, except one who Himself was God.

Verse 1 stands apart as revealing the pretemporal and essential nature of the Word. In it the deep ocean of the divine nature is partially disclosed, though no created eye can either plunge to discern its depths or travel beyond our horizon to its boundless, shoreless extent. The remainder of the passage deals with the majestic march of the self-revealing Word through creation, and illumination of humanity, up to the climax in the Incarnation.

John repeats the substance of verse 1 in verse 2, apparently in order to identify the Agent of creation with the august person whom he has disclosed as filling eternity. By Him creation was effected, and, because He was what verse 1 has declared Him to be, therefore was it effected by Him. Observe the three steps marked in three consecutive verses. 'All things were made by Him'; literally 'became,' where the

emergence into existence of created things is strongly contrasted with the divine 'was' of verse 1. 'Through Him' declares that the Word is the agent of creation; 'without Him' (literally, 'apart from Him') declares that created things continue in existence because He communicates it to them. Man is the highest of these 'all things,' and verse 4 sets forth the relation of the Word to Him, declaring that 'life,' in all the width and height of its possible meanings, inheres in Him, and is communicated by Him, with its distinguishing accompaniment, in human nature, of light, whether of reason or of conscience.

So far, John has been speaking as from the upper or divine side, but in verse 5 he speaks from the under or human, and shows us how the self-revelation of the Word has, by some mysterious necessity, been conflict. The 'darkness' was not made by Him, but it is there, and the beams of the light have to contend with it. Something alien must have come in, some catastrophe have happened, that the light should have to stream into a region of darkness.

John takes 'the Fall' for granted, and in verse 5 describes the whole condition of things, both within and beyond the region of special revelation. The shining of the light is continuous, but the darkness is obstinate. It is the tragedy and crime of the world that the darkness will not have the light. It is the long-suffering mercy of God that the light repelled is not extinguished, but shines meekly on.

Verses 6-13 deal with the historical appearance of the Word. The Forerunner is introduced, as in the other Gospels; and, significantly enough, this Evangelist calls him only 'John,'—omitting 'the Baptist,' as was very natural to him, the other John, who would feel

less need for distinguishing the two than others did. The subordinate office of a witness to the light is declared positively and negatively, and the dignity of such a function is implied. To witness to the light, and to be the means of leading men to believe, was honour for any man.

The limited office of the Forerunner serves as contrast to the transcendent lustre of the true Light. The meaning of verse 9 may be doubtful, but verses 10 and 11 clearly refer to the historical manifestation of the Word, and probably verse 9 does so too. Possibly, however, it rather points to the inner revelation by the Word, which is the 'light of men.' In that case the phrase 'that cometh into the world' would refer to 'every man,' whereas it is more natural in this context to refer it to 'the light,' and to see in the verse a reference to the illumination of humanity consequent on the appearance of Jesus Christ. The use of 'world' and 'came' in verses 10 and 11 points in that direction. Verse 9 represents the Word as 'coming'; verse 10 regards Him as come—'He was in the world.'

Note the three clauses, so like, and yet so unlike the august three in verse 1. Note the sad issue of the coming—'The world knew Him not.' In that 'world' there was one place where He might have looked for recognition, one set of people who might have been expected to hail Him; but not only the wide world was blind ('knew not'), but the narrower circle of 'His own' fought against what they knew to be light ('received not').

But the rejection was not universal, and John proceeds to develop the blessed consequences of receiving the light. For the first time he speaks the great word

'believe.' The act of faith is the condition or means of 'receiving.' It is the opening of the mental eye for the light to pour in. We possess Jesus in the measure of our faith. The object of faith is 'His name,' which means, not this or that collocation of letters by which He is designated, but His whole self-revelation. The result of such faith is 'the right to become children of God,' for through faith in the only-begotten Son we receive the communication of a divine life which makes us, too, sons. That new life, with its consequence of sonship, does not belong to human nature as received from parents, but is a gift of God mediated through faith in the Light who is the Word.

Verse 14 is not mere repetition of the preceding, but advances beyond it in that it declares the wonder of the way by which that divine Word did enter into the world. John here, as it were, draws back the curtain, and shows us the transcendent miracle of divine love, for which he has been preparing in all the preceding. Note that he has not named 'the Word' since verse 1, but here he again uses the majestic expression to bring out strongly the contrast between the ante-temporal glory and the historical lowliness. These four words, 'The Word became flesh,' are the foundation of all our knowledge of God, of man, of the relations between them, the foundation of all our hopes, the guarantee of all our peace, the pledge of all blessedness. 'He tabernacled among us.' As the divine glory of old dwelt between the cherubim, so Jesus is among men the true Temple, wherein we see a truer glory than that radiant light which filled the closed chamber of the holy of holies. Rapturous remembrances rose before the Apostle as he wrote,

'We beheld His glory'; and he has told us what he has beheld and seen with his eyes, that we also may have fellowship with him in beholding. The glory that shone from the Incarnate Word was no menacing or dazzling light. He and it were 'full of grace and truth,' perfect Love bending to inferiors and sinners, with hands full of gifts and a heart full of tenderness and the revelation of reality, both as regards God and man. His grace bestows all that our lowness needs, His truth teaches all that our ignorance requires. All our gifts and all our knowledge come from the Incarnate Word, in whom believing we are the children of God.

THE LIGHT AND THE LAMPS

'He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.'—JOHN I. 8.

'He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in His light.'—JOHN V. 35.

My two texts both refer to John the Baptist. One of them is the Evangelist's account of him, the other is our Lord's eulogium upon him. The latter of my texts, as the Revised Version shows, would be more properly rendered, 'He was a lamp' rather than 'He was a light,' and the contrast between the two words, the 'light' and 'the lamps,' is my theme. I gather all that I would desire to say into three points: 'that Light' and its witnesses; the underived Light and the kindled lamps; the undying Light and the lamps that go out.

I. First of all, then, the contrast suggested to us is between 'that Light' and its witnesses.

John, in that profound prologue which is the deepest

part of Scripture, and lays firm and broad in the depths the foundation-stones of a reasonable faith, draws the contrast between 'that Light' and them whose business it was to bear witness to it. As for the former, I cannot here venture to dilate upon the great, and to me absolutely satisfying and fundamental, thoughts that lie in these eighteen first verses of this Gospel. 'The Word was with God,' and that Word was the Agent of Creation. the Fountain of Life, the Source of the Light which is inseparable from all human life. John goes back, with the simplicity of a child's speech, which yet is deeper than all philosophies, to a Beginning, far anterior to 'the Beginning' of which Genesis speaks, and declares that before creation that Light shone; and he looks out over the whole world, and declares, that before and beyond the limits of the historical manifestation of the Word in the flesh, its beams spread over the whole race of man. But they are all focussed, if I may so speak, and gathered to a point which burns as well as illuminates, in the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ in the flesh. 'That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'

Next, he turns to the highest honour and the most imperative duty laid, not only upon mighty men and officials, but upon all on whose happy eyeballs this Light has shone, and into whose darkened hearts the joy and peace and purity of it have flowed, and he says, 'He was sent'—and they are sent—'to bear witness of that Light.' It is the noblest function that a man can discharge. It is a function that is discharged by the very existence through the ages of a community which, generation after generation, subsists, and generation after generation manifests in varying degrees of bright-

ness, and with various modifications of tint, the same light. There is the family character in all true Christians, with whatever diversities of idiosyncrasies, and national life or ecclesiastical distinctions. Whether it be Francis of Assisi or John Wesley, whether it be Thomas à Kempis or George Fox, the light is one that shines through these many-coloured panes of glass, and the living Church is the witness of a living Lord, not only before it, and behind it, and above it, but living in it. They are 'light' because they are irradiated by Him. They are 'light' because they are 'in the Lord.' But not only by the fact of the existence of such a community is the witness-bearing effected, but it comes as a personal obligation, with immense weight of pressure and immense possibilities of joy in the discharge of it, to every Christian man and woman.

What, then, is the witness that we all are bound to bear, and shall bear if we are true to our obligations and to our Lord? Mainly, dear brethren, the witness of experience. That a Christian man shall be able to stand up and say, 'I know this because I live it, and I testify to Jesus Christ because I for myself have found Him to be the life of my life, the Light of all my seeing, the joy of my heart, my home, and my anchorage'—that is the witness that is impregnable. And there is no better sign of the trend of Christian thought to-day than the fact that the testimony of experience is more and more coming to be recognised by thoughtful men and writers as being the sovereign attestation of the reality of the Light. 'I see'; that is the proof that light has touched my eye-balls. And when a man can contrast, as some of us can, our present vision with our erstwhile darkness, then the evidence, like that of the sturdy blind man in

the Gospels, who had nothing to say in reply to the subtleties and Rabbinical traps and puzzles but only 'I was blind; now I see'—his experience is likely to have the effect that it had in another miracle of healing: 'Beholding the man which was healed standing amongst them, they could say nothing against it.' I should think they could not.

But there is one thing that will always characterise the true witnesses to that Light, and that is self-suppression. Remember the beautiful, immovable humility of the Baptist about whom these texts were spoken: 'What sayest thou of thyself?' 'I am a Voice,' that is all. 'Art thou that Prophet?' 'No!' 'Art thou the Christ?' 'No! I am nothing but a Voice.' And remember how, when John's disciples tried to light the infernal fires of jealousy in his quiet heart by saying, 'He whom thou didst baptise, and to whom thou didst give witness'—He whom thou didst start on His career—'is baptising,' poaching upon thy preserves, 'and all men come unto Him,' the only answer that he gave was, 'The friend of the Bridegroom'—who stands by in a quiet, dark corner—'rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice.' Keep yourself out of sight, Christian teachers and preachers; put Christ in the front, and hide behind Him.

II. Now let me ask you to look at the other contrast that is suggested by our other text. The underrived light and the kindled lamps.

It is possible to read the words of that second text thus—'He was a lamp kindled and (therefore) shining.' But whether that be the meaning, or whether the usual rendering is correct, the emblem itself carries the same thought, for a lamp must be lit by contact with a light, and must be fed with oil, if its flame is

to be sustained. And so the very metaphor—whatever the force of the ambiguous word—in its eloquent contrast between the Light and the lamp, suggests this thought, that the one is underived, self-fed, and therefore undying, and that the other owes all its flame to the touch of that uncreated Light, and burns brightly only on condition of its keeping up the contact with Him, and being fed continually from His stores of radiance.

I need not say more than a word with regard to the former member of that contrast suggested here. That unlit Light derives its brilliancy, according to the Scriptural teaching, from nothing but its divine union with the Father. So that long before there were eyes to see, there was the eradiation and outshining of the Father's glory. I do not enter into these depths, but this I would say, that what is called the 'originality' of Jesus is only explained when we reverently see in that unique life the shining through a pure humanity, as through a sheet of alabaster, of that underived, divine Light. Jesus is an insoluble problem to men who will not see in Him the Eternal Light which 'in the beginning was with God.' You find in Him no trace of gradual acquisition of knowledge, or of arguing or feeling His way to His beliefs. You find in Him no trace of consciousness of a great horizon of darkness encompassing the region where He sees light. You find in Him no trace of a recognition of other sources from which He has drawn any portion of His light. You find in Him the distinct declaration that His relation to truth is not the relation of men who learn, and grow, and acquire, and know in part; for, says He, '*I am the Truth.*' He stands apart from us all, and above us all, in that He owes His radiance

to none, and can dispense it to every man. The question which the puzzled Jews asked about Him, 'How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?' may be widened out to all the characteristics of His human life. To me the only answer is: 'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ! Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.'

Dependent on Him are the little lights which He has lit, and in the midst of which He walks. Union with Jesus Christ—'that Light'—is the condition of all human light. That is true over all regions, as I believe. 'The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding.' The candle of the Lord shines in every man, and 'that true Light lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' Thinker, student, scientist, poet, author, practical man—all of them are lit from the uncreated Source, and all of them, if they understand their own nature, would say, 'In Thy light do we see Light.'

But especially is this great thought true and exemplified within the limits of the Christian life. For the Christian to be touched with Christ's Promethean finger is to flame into light. And the condition of continuing to shine is to continue the contact which first illuminated. A break in the contact, of a finger's breadth, is as effectual as one of a mile. Let Christian men and women, if they would shine, remember, 'Ye are light in the Lord'; and if we stray, and get without the circle of the Light, we pass into darkness, and ourselves cease to shine.

Brethren, it is threadbare truth, that the condition of Christian vitality and radiance is close and unbroken contact with Jesus Christ, the Source of all light. Threadbare; but if we lived as if we believed it, the

Church would be revolutionised and the world illuminated; and many a smoking wick would flash up into a blazing torch. Let Christian people remember that the words of my text define no special privilege or duty of any official or man of special endowments, but that to all of us has been said, 'Ye are My witnesses,' and to all of us is offered the possibility of being 'burning and shining lights' if we keep ourselves close to that Light.

III. Lastly, the second of my texts suggests—the contrast between the Undying Light and the lamps that go out.

'For a season ye were willing to rejoice in His light.' There is nothing in the present condition of the civilised and educated world more remarkable and more difficult for some people to explain than the contrast between the relation which Jesus Christ bears to the present age, and the relation which all other great names in the past—philosophers, poets, guides of men—bear to it. There is nothing in the world the least like the vividness, the freshness, the closeness, of the personal relation which thousands and thousands of people, with common sense in their heads, bear to that Man who died nineteen hundred years ago. All others pass, sooner or later, into the darkness. Thickening mists of oblivion, fold by fold, gather round the brightest names. But here is Jesus Christ, whom all classes of thinkers and social reformers have to reckon with to-day, who is a living power amongst the trivialities of the passing moment, and in whose words and in the teaching of whose life serious men feel that there lie undeveloped yet, and certainly not yet put into practice, principles which are destined to revolutionise society and change the world. And how does that come?

I am not going to enter upon that question; I only ask you to think of the contrast between His position, in this generation, to communities and individuals, and the position of all other great names which lie in the past. Why, it does not take more than a lifetime such as mine, for instance, to remember how the great lights that shone seventy years ago in English thinking and in English literature, have for the most part gone out, and what we young men thought to be bright particular stars, this new generation pooh-poohs as mere exhalations from the marsh or twinkling and uncertain tapers, and you will find their books in the twopenny-box at the bookseller's door. A cynical diplomatist, in one of our modern dramas, sums it up, after seeing the death of a revolutionary, 'I have known eight leaders of revolts.' And some of us could say, 'We have known about as many guides of men who have been forgotten and passed away.' 'His Name shall endure for ever. His name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him; all generations shall call Him blessed.' Even Shelley had the prophecy forced from him—

'The moon of Mahomet
Arose and it shall set,
While blazoned as on heaven's eternal noon,
The Cross leads generations on.'

We may sum up the contrast between the undying Light and the lamps that go out in the old words: 'They truly were many, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death, but this Man, because He continueth ever . . . is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through Him.'

So, brethren, when lamps are quenched, let us look to the Light. When our own lives are darkened because our household light is taken from its candlestick, let us lift up our hearts and hopes to Him that abideth for ever. Do not let us fall into the folly, and commit the sin, of putting our heart's affections, our spirit's trust, upon any that can pass and that must change. We need a Person whom we can clasp, and who never will glide from our hold. We need a Light uncreated, self-fed, eternal. 'Whilst ye have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of light.'

'THREE TABERNACLES'

'The Word . . . dwelt among us.'—JOHN I. 14.

. . . He that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them.'—REV. vii. 15.

' . . . Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them.
—REV. xxi. 3.

THE word rendered 'dwelt,' in these three passages, is a peculiar one. It is only found in the New Testament—in this Gospel and in the Book of Revelation. That fact constitutes one of the many subtle threads of connection between these two books, which at first sight seem so extremely unlike each other; and it is a morsel of evidence in favour of the common authorship of the Gospel and of the Apocalypse, which has often, and very vehemently in these latter days of criticism, been denied.

The force of the word, however, is the matter to which I desire especially to draw attention. It literally means 'to dwell in a tent,' or, if we may use such a word, 'to tabernacle,' and there is no doubt a reference

to the Tabernacle in which the divine Presence abode in the wilderness and in the land of Israel before the erection. In all three passages, then, we may see allusion to that early symbolical dwelling of God with man. 'The Word tabernacled among us'; so is the truth for earth and time. 'He that sitteth upon the throne shall spread His tabernacle upon' the multitude which no man can number, who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb; that is the truth for the spirits of just men made perfect, the waiting Church, which expects the redemption of the body. 'God shall tabernacle with them'; that is the truth for the highest condition of humanity, when the Tabernacle of God shall be with redeemed men in the new earth. 'Let us build three tabernacles,' one for the Incarnate Christ, one for the interspace between earth and heaven, and one for the culmination of all things. And it is to these three aspects of the one thought, set forth in rude symbol by the movable tent in the wilderness, that I ask you to turn now.

I. First, then, we have to think of that Tabernacle for earth. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt, as in a tent, amongst us.'

The human nature, the visible, material body of Jesus Christ, in which there enshrined itself the everlasting Word, which from the beginning was the Agent of all divine revelation, that is the true Temple of God. When we begin to speak about the special presence of Omnipresence in any one place, we soon lose ourselves, and get into deep waters of glory, where there is no standing. And I do not care to deal here with theological definitions or thorny questions, but simply to set forth, as the language of my text sets before us, that one transcendent, wonderful, all-blessed

thought that this poor human nature is capable of, and has really once in the history of the world received into itself, the real, actual presence of the whole fulness of the Divinity. What must be the kindred and likeness between Godhood and manhood when into the frail vehicle of our humanity that wondrous treasure can be poured; when the fire of God can burn in the bush of our human nature, and that nature not be consumed? So it has been. 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'

And when we come with our questions, How? In what manner? How can the lesser contain the greater? we have to be content with the recognition that the manner is beyond our fathoming, and to accept the fact, pressed upon our faith, that our hearts may grasp it and be at peace. God hath dwelt in humanity. The everlasting Word, who is the forthcoming of all the fulness of Deity into the realm of finite creatures, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

But the Tabernacle was not only the dwelling-place of God, it was also and, therefore, the place of Revelation of God. So in our text there follows, 'we beheld His glory.' As in the tent in the wilderness there hovered between the outstretched wings of the silent cherubim, above the Mercy-seat, the brightness of the symbolical cloud which was expressly named 'the glory of God,' and was the visible manifestation of His real presence; so John would have us think that in that lowly humanity, with its curtains and its coverings of flesh, there lay shrined in the inmost place the brightness of the light of the manifest glory of God. 'We beheld His glory.' The rapturous adoration of the remembrance overcomes him, and he breaks his sentence, reckless of grammatical connection, as the fulness of

the blessed memory floods into his soul. 'That glory was as of the Only Begotten of the Father.' The manifestation of God in Christ is unique, as becomes Him who partakes of the nature of that God of whom He is the Representative and the Revealer.

And how did that glory make itself known to us? By miracle? Yes! As we read in the story of the first that Christ wrought, 'He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed upon Him.' By miracle? Yes! As we read His own promise at the grave of Lazarus: 'Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?' But, blessed be His name, miracle is not the highest manifestation of Christ's glory and of God's. The uniqueness of the revelation of Christ's glory in God does not depend upon the deeds which He wrought. For, as the context goes on to tell, the Word which tabernacled among us was 'full of grace and truth,' and therein is the glory most gloriously revealed.

The lambent light of stooping love that shone forth warning and attracting in His gentle life, and the clear white beam of unmingled truth that streamed from the radiant purity of Christ's life, revealed God to hearts that pine for love and spirits that hunger for truth, as no others of God's self-revealing works have done. And that revelation of the glory of God in the fulness of grace and truth is the highest possible revelation. For the divinest thing in God is love, and the true 'glory of God' is neither some symbolical flashing light nor the pomp of mere power and majesty; nor even those inconceivable and incommunicable attributes which we christen with names like Omnipotence and Omnipresence and Infinitude, and the like. These are all at the fringes of the brightness. The true central

heart and lustrous light of the glory of God lie in His love, and of that glory Christ is the unique Representative and Revealer, because He is the only Begotten Son, and 'full of grace and truth.'

Thus the Word tabernacled amongst us. And though the Tabernacle to outward seeming was covered by curtains and skins that hid all the glowing splendour within; yet in that lowly life that was lived in the body of His humiliation, and knew our limitations and our weaknesses, 'the glory of the Lord was revealed; and all flesh hath seen it together' and acknowledged the divine Presence there.

Still further the Tabernacle was the place of sacrifice. So in the tabernacle of His flesh Jesus offered up the one sacrifice for sins for ever. In the offering up of His human life in continuous obedience, and in the offering up of His body and blood in the bitter Passion of the Cross, He brought men nigh unto God.

Therefore, because of all these things, because the Tabernacle is the dwelling-place of God, the place of revelation, and the place of sacrifice, therefore, finally is it the meeting-place betwixt God and man. In the Old Testament it is always called by the name which our Revised Version has accurately substituted for 'tabernacle of the congregation,' namely 'tent of meeting.' The correctness of that rendering and the meaning of the name are established by several passages in the Old Testament, as for instance, 'There I will meet with you, to speak there unto thee, and there I will meet with the children of Israel.' So in Christ, who by His Incarnation lays His hand upon both, God touches man and man touches God. We who are afar off are made nigh, and in that 'true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man' we meet God and are glad.

'And so the word was flesh, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds.'

The temple for earth is 'the temple of His body.'

II. We have the Tabernacle for the Heavens.

In the context of our second passage we have a vision of the great multitude redeemed out of all nations and kindreds, 'standing before the Throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands.' The palms in their hands give important help towards understanding the vision. As has been often remarked, there are no heathen emblems in the Book of the Apocalypse. All its metaphors move within the circle of Jewish experiences and facts. So that we are not to think of the Roman palm of victory, but of the Jewish palm which was borne at the Feast of Tabernacles. What was the Feast of Tabernacles? A festival established on purpose to recall to the minds and to the gratitude of the Jews settled in their own land the days of their wandering in the wilderness. Part of the ritual of it was that during its celebration they builded for themselves booths or tabernacles of leaves and boughs of trees, under which they dwelt, thus reminding themselves of their nomad condition.

Now what beauty and power it gives to the word of my text, if we take in this allusion to the Jewish festival! The great multitude bearing the palms are keeping the feast, memorial of past wilderness wanderings; and 'He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle above them,' as the word might be here rendered. That is to say, He Himself shall build and be the tent in which they dwell; He Himself shall dwell with them in it. He Himself, in closer union than

can be conceived of here, shall keep them company during that feast.

What a thought of that condition—the condition as I believe represented in this vision—of the spirits of the just made perfect, ‘who wait for the adoption, to wit, the resurrection of the body,’ is given us if we take this point of view to interpret the whole lovely symbolism. It is all a time of glad, grateful remembrance of the wilderness march. It is all a time in which festal joys shall be theirs, and the memory of the trials and the weariness and the sorrow and the solitude that are past shall deepen to a more exquisite poignancy of delight, the rest and the fellowship and the felicity of that calm Presence, and God Himself shall spread His tent above them, lodge with them, and they with Him.

And so, dear brethren, rest in that assurance, that though we know so little of that state, we know this: ‘Absent from the body, present with the Lord,’ and that the happy company who bear the palms shall dwell in God, and God in them.

III. And now, lastly, look at that final vision which we have in these texts, which we may call the Tabernacle for the renewed earth.

I do not pretend to interpret the scenery and the setting of these Apocalyptic visions with dogmatic confidence, but it seems to me as if the emblems of this final vision coincide with dim hints in many other portions of Scripture; to the effect that some cosmical change having passed upon this material world in which we dwell, it, in some regenerated form, shall be the final abode of a regenerated and redeemed humanity. That, I think, is the natural interpretation of a great deal of Scriptural teaching.

For that highest condition there is set forth this as the all-sufficing light upon it. 'Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them.' The climax and the goal of all the divine working, and the long processes of God's love for, and discipline of, the world, are to be this, that He and men shall abide together in unity and concord. That is God's wish from the beginning. We read in one of the profound utterances of the Book of Proverbs how from of old the 'delights' of the Incarnate Wisdom which foreshadowed the Incarnate Word 'were with the sons of men.' And, at the close of all things, when the vision of this final chapter shall be fulfilled, God will say, settling Himself in the midst of a redeemed humanity, 'Lo! here will I dwell, for I have desired it. This is My rest for ever.' He will tabernacle with men, and men with Him.

We know not, and never shall know until experience strips the bandages from our eyes, what new methods of participation of the divine nature, and new possibilities of intimacy and intercourse with Him may be ours when the veils of flesh and sense and time have all dropped away. New windows may be opened in our spirits, from which we shall perceive new aspects of the divine character. New doors may be opened in our souls, from out of which we may pass to touch parts of His nature, all impalpable and inconceivable to us now. And when all the veils of a discordant moral nature are taken away, and we are pure, then we shall see, then we shall draw nigh to God. The thing that chiefly separates man from God is man's sin. When that is removed, the centrifugal force which kept our tiny orb apart from the great central sun being withdrawn, we shall, as it were, fall into the brightness and

be one, not losing our sense of individuality, which would be to lose all the blessedness, but united with Him in a union far more intimate than earth can parallel. 'The Tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will tabernacle with them.'

Do not let us forget that this highest and ultimate hope that is held forth here, of the union and communion, perfect and perpetual, of humanity with God, does not sweep aside Jesus Christ. For through all eternity the Everlasting Word, the Christ who bears our nature in its glorified form, or, rather, whose nature in its glorified form we shall bear, is the Medium of Revelation, and the Medium of communication between man and God.

'I saw no Temple therein,' says this final vision of the Apocalypse, but 'God Almighty and the Lamb,' and these are the Temples thereof. Therefore through eternity God shall tabernacle with men, as He does tabernacle with us now through Him, in whom dwelleth as in its perennial habitation, 'all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'

So we have the three tabernacles, for earth, for heaven, for the renewed earth; and these three, if I may say so, are like the triple division of that ancient Tabernacle in the wilderness: the Outer Court; the Holy Place; the Holiest of all. Let us enter into that outer court, and abide and commune with that God who comes near to us, revealing, forgiving, in the person of His Son, and then we shall pass from court to court, 'and go from strength to strength, until every one of us in Zion appear before God'; and enter into the Holiest of all, where 'within the veil' we shall receive splendours of revelation undreamed of here, and enjoy depths of communion to which the selectest

moments of fellowship with God on earth are shallow and poor.

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

‘And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.’—JOHN 1. 16.

WHAT a remarkable claim that is which the Apostle here makes for his Master! On the one side he sets His solitary figure as the universal Giver; on the other side are gathered the whole race of men, recipients from Him. As in the wilderness the children of Israel clustered round the rock from which poured out streams, copious enough for all the thirsty camp, John, echoing his Master’s words, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink,’ here declares ‘Of *His* fulness have *all we* received.’

I. Notice, then, the one ever full Source.

The words of my text refer back to those of the fourteenth verse: ‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.’ ‘And of His fulness have all we received.’ The ‘fulness’ here seems to mean that of which the Incarnate Word was full, the ‘grace and truth’ which dwelt without measure in Him; the unlimited and absolute completeness and abundance of divine powers and glories which ‘tabernacled’ in Him. And so the language of my text, both verbally and really, is substantially equivalent to that of the Apostle Paul. ‘In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him.’ The whole infinite Majesty, and inexhaustible resources of the divine nature, were incorporated and insphered in that Incarnate Word from whom all men may draw.

There are involved in that thought two ideas. One is the unmistakable assertion of the whole fulness of the divine nature as being in the Incarnate Word, and the other is that the whole fulness of the divine nature dwells in the Incarnate Word in order that men may get at it.

The words of my text go back, as I said, to the previous verse; but notice what an advance upon that previous verse they present to us. There we read, 'We beheld His glory.' To *behold* is much, but to *possess* is more. It is much to say that Christ comes to manifest God, but that is a poor, starved account of the purpose of His coming, if that is all you have to say. He comes to manifest Him. Yes! but He comes to communicate Him, not merely to dazzle us with a vision, not merely to show us Him as from afar, not merely to make Him known to understanding or to heart; but to bestow—in no mere metaphor, but in simple, literal fact—the absolute possession of the divine nature. 'We beheld His glory' is a reminiscence that thrills the Evangelist, though half a century has passed since the vision gleamed upon his eyes; but 'of His fulness have all we received' is infinitely and unspeakably more. And the manifestation was granted that the possession might be sure, for this is the very centre and heart of Christianity, that in Him who is Christianity God is not merely made known, but given; not merely beheld, but possessed.

In order that that divine fulness might belong to us there was needed that the Word should be made flesh; and there was further needed that incarnation should be crowned by sacrifice, and that life should be perfected in death. The alabaster box had to be broken before the house could be filled with the odour of the

ointment. If I may so say, the sack, the coarse-spun sack of Christ's humanity, had to be cut asunder in order that the wealth that was stored in it might be poured into our hands. God came near us in the life, but God became ours in the death, of His dear Son. Incarnation was needed for that great privilege—'we beheld His glory'; but the Crucifixion was needed in order to make possible the more wondrous prerogative: 'Of His fulness have all we received.' God gives Himself to men in the Christ whose life revealed and whose death imparted Him to the world.

And so He is the sole Source. All men, in a very real sense, draw from His fulness. 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' The life of the body and the life of the spirit willing, knowing, loving, all which makes life into light, all comes to us through that everlasting Word of God. And when that Word has 'become flesh and dwelt among us,' His gifts are not only the gifts of light and life, which all men draw from Him, but the gifts of grace and truth which all those who love Him receive at His hands. His gifts, like the water from some fountain, may flow underground into many of the pastures of the wilderness; and many a man is blessed by them who knows not from whence they come. It is He from whom all the truth, all the grace which illuminates and blesses humanity, flow into all lands in all ages.

II. Consider, then, again, the many receivers from the one Source. 'Of His fulness have all we received.'

Observe, we are not told definitely what it is that we receive. If we refer back to words in a previous verse, they may put us on the right track for answering the question, What is it that we get? 'He came unto His own,' says verse 11, 'and His own received Him not;

but as many as received Him, to them gave He power,' etc. That answers the question, What do we receive? Christ is more than all His gifts. All His gifts are treasured up in Him and inseparable from Him. We get Jesus Christ Himself.

The blessings that we receive may be stated in many different ways. You may say we get pardon, purity, hope, joy, the prospect of Heaven, power for service; all these and a hundred more designations by which we might describe the one gift. All these are but the consequences of our having got the Christ within our hearts. He does not give pardon and the rest, as a king might give pardon and honours, a thousand miles off, bestowing it by a mere word, upon some criminal, but He gives all that He gives because He gives Himself. The real possession that we receive is neither more nor less than a loving Saviour, to enter our spirits and abide there, and be the spirit of our spirits, and the life of our lives.

Then, notice the universality of this possession. John has said, in the previous words, '*We* beheld His glory.' He refers there, of course, to the comparatively small circle of the eye-witnesses of our Master's life; who, at the time when he wrote, must have been very, very few in number. They had had the prerogative of seeing with their eyes and handling with their hands the Word of life that '*was* manifested unto us'; and with that prerogative the duty of bearing witness of Him to the rest of men. But in the '*receiving*,' John associates with himself, and with the other eye-witnesses, all those who had listened to their word, and had received the truth in the love of it. '*We* beheld' refers to the narrower circle; '*we all* received' to the wider sweep of the whole Church. There is no

exclusive class, no special prerogative. Every Christian man, the weakest, the lowliest, the most uncultured, rude, ignorant, foolish, the most besotted in the past, who has wandered furthest away from the Master; whose spirit has been most destitute of all sparks of goodness and of God—receives from out of His fulness. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.' And every one of us, if we will, may have dwelling in our hearts, in the greatness of His strength, in the sweetness of His love, in the clearness of His illuminating wisdom, the Incarnate Word, the Comforter, the All-in-all whom 'we all receive.'

And, as I said, that word 'all' might have even a wider extension without going beyond the limits of the truth. For on the one side there stands Christ, the universal Giver; and grouped before Him, in all attitudes of weakness and of want, is gathered the whole race of mankind. And from Him there pours out a stream copious enough to supply all the necessities of every human soul that lives to-day, of every human soul that has lived in the past, of every one that shall live in the future. There is no limit to the universality except only the limit of the human will: 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

Think of that solitary figure of the Christ reared up, as it were, before the whole race of man, as able to replenish all their emptiness with His fulness, and to satisfy all their thirst with His sufficiency. Dear brother! you have a great gaping void in your heart—an aching emptiness there, which you know better than I can tell you. Look to Him who can fill it and it shall be filled. He can supply all your wants as He can supply all the wants of every soul of man. And after generations have drawn from Him, the water

will not have sunk one hairsbreadth in the great fountain, but there will be enough for all coming eternities as there has been enough for all past times. He is like His own miracle—the thousands are gathered on the grass, they do ‘all eat and are filled.’ As their necessities required the bread was multiplied, and at the last there was more left than there had seemed to be at the beginning. So ‘of His fulness have all we received’; and after a universe has drawn from it, for an Eternity, the fulness is not turned into scantiness or emptiness.

III. And so, lastly, notice the continuous flow from the inexhaustible Source. ‘Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.’

The word ‘for’ is a little singular. Of course it means *instead of, in exchange for*; and the Evangelist’s idea seems to be that as one supply of grace is given and used, it is, as it were, given back to the Bestower, who substitutes for it a fresh and unused vessel, filled with new grace. He might have said, *grace upon grace*; one supply being piled upon the other. But his notion is, rather, one supply given in substitution for the other, ‘new lamps for old ones.’

Just as a careful gardener will stand over a plant that needs water, and will pour the water on the surface until the earth has drunk it up, and then add a little more; so He gives step by step, grace for grace, an uninterrupted bestowal, yet regulated according to the absorbing power of the heart that receives it. Underlying that great thought are two things: the continuous communication of grace, and the progressive communication of grace. We have here the continuous communication of grace. God is always pouring Himself out upon us in Christ. There is a perpetual out

flow from Him to us: if there is not a perpetual inflow into us from Him it is our fault, and not His. He is always giving, and His intention is that our lives shall be a continual reception. Are they? How many Christian men there are whose Christian lives at the best are like some of those Australian or Siberian rivers; in the dry season, a pond here, a stretch of sand, waterless and barren there, then another place with a drop of muddy water in some hollow, and then another stretch of sand, and so on. Why should not the ponds be linked together by a flashing stream? God is always pouring Himself out; why do we not always take Him in?

There is but one answer, and the answer is, that we do not fulfil the condition, which condition is simple faith. 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God; even to them that believed on His name.' Faith is the condition of receiving, and wherever there is a continuous trust there will be an unbroken grace; and wherever there are interrupted gifts it is because there has been an intermitted trust in Him. Do not let your lives be like some dimly lighted road, with a lamp here, and a stretch of darkness, and then another twinkling light; let the light run all along the side of your path, because at every moment your heart is turning to Christ with trust. Make your faith continuous, and God will make His grace incessant, and out of His fulness you will draw continual supplies of needed strength.

But not only have we here the notion of continuous, but also, as it seems to me, of progressive gifts. Each measure of Christ received, if we use it aright, makes us capable of possessing more of Christ. And the measure of our capacity is the measure of His gift, and

the more we can hold the more we shall get. The walls of our hearts are elastic, the vessel expands by being filled out; it throbs itself wider by desire and faith. The wider we open our mouths the larger will be the gift that God puts into them. Each measure and stage of grace utilised and honestly employed will make us capable and desirous, and, therefore, possessors, of more and more of the grace that He gives. So the ideal of the Christian life, and God's intention concerning us, is not only that we should have an uninterrupted, but a growing possession, of Christ and of His grace.

Is that the case with you, my friend? Can you hold more of God than you could twenty years ago? Is there any more capacity in your soul for more of Christ than there was long, long ago? If there is you have more of Him; if you have not more of Him it is because you cannot contain more; and you cannot contain more because you have not desired more, and because you have been so wretchedly unfaithful in your use of what you had. The ideal is, 'they go from strength to strength,' and the end of that is, 'every one of them appeareth before God.'

So, dear brother, as the dash of the waves will hollow out some little indentation on the coast, and make it larger and larger until there is a great bay, with its headlands miles apart, and its deep bosom stretching far into the interior, and all the expanse full of flashing waters and leaping waves, so the giving Christ works a place for Himself in a man's heart, and makes the spirit which receives and faithfully uses the gifts which He brings, capable of more of Himself, and fills the widened space with larger gifts and new grace.

Only remember the condition of having Him is

trusting to His name and longing for His presence. 'If any man open the door I will come in.' We have Him if we trust Him. That trust is no mere passive reception, such as is the case with some empty jar which lies open-mouthed on the shore and lets the sea wash into it and out of it, as may happen. But the 'receive' of our text might be as truly rendered 'take.' Faith is an active taking, not a passive receiving. We must 'lay hold on eternal life.' Faith is the hand that grasps the offered gift, the mouth that feeds upon the bread of God, the voice that says to Christ, 'Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord; why standest Thou without?' Such a faith alone brings us into vital connection with Jesus. Without it, you will be none the richer for all His fulness, and may perish of famine in the midst of plenty, like a man dying of hunger outside the door of a granary. They who believe take the Saviour who is given, and they who take receive, and they who receive obtain day by day growing grace from the fulness of Christ, and so come ever nearer to the realisation of the ultimate purpose of the Father, that they should be 'filled with all the fulness of God.'

GRACE AND TRUTH

'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

JOHN 1. 17.

THERE are scarcely any traces, in the writings of the Apostle John, of that great controversy as to the relation of the Law and the Gospel which occupied and embittered so much of the work of the Apostle Paul. We have floated into an entirely different region in John's writings. The old controversies are

dead—settled, I suppose, mainly by Paul's own words, and also to a large extent by the logic of events. This verse is almost the only one in which John touches upon that extinct controversy, and here the Law is introduced simply as a foil to set off the brightness of the Gospel. All artists know the value of contrast in giving prominence. A dark background flashes up brighter colours into brilliancy. White is never so white as when it is relieved against black. And so here the special preciousness and distinctive peculiarities of what we receive in Christ are made more vivid and more distinct by contrast with what in old days 'was given by Moses.'

Every word in this verse is significant. 'Law' is set against 'grace and truth.' It was 'given'; they 'came.' Moses is contrasted with Christ. So we have a threefold antithesis as between Law and Gospel: in reference to their respective contents; in reference to the manner of their communication; and in reference to the person of their Founders. And I think, if we look at these three points, we shall get some clear apprehension of the glories of that Gospel which the Apostle would thereby commend to our affection and to our faith.

I. First of all, then, we have here the special glory of the contents of the Gospel heightened by the contrast with Law.

Law has no tenderness, no pity, no feeling. Tables of stone and a pen of iron are its fitting vehicles. Flashing lightnings and rolling thunders symbolise the fierce light which it casts upon men's duty and the terrors of its retribution. Inflexible, and with no compassion for human weakness, it tells us what we ought to be, but it does not help us to be it. It 'binds heavy

burdens, and grievous to be borne,' upon men's consciences, but puts not forth 'the tip of a finger' to enable men to bear them. And this is true about law in all forms, whether it be the Mosaic Law, or whether it be the law of our own country, or whether it be the laws written upon men's consciences. These all partake of the one characteristic, that they help nothing to the fulfilment of their own behests, and that they are barbed with threatenings of retribution. Like some avenging goddess, law comes down amongst men, terrible in her purity, awful in her beauty, with a hard light in her clear grey eyes—in the one hand the tables of stone, bearing the commandments which we have broken, and in the other a sharp two-edged sword.

And this is the opposite of all that comes to us in the Gospel. The contrast divides into two portions. The 'Law' is set against 'grace and truth.' Let us look at these two in order.

What we have in Christ is not law, but grace. Law, as I said, has no heart; the meaning of the Gospel is the unveiling of the heart of God. Law commands and demands; it says: 'This shalt thou do, or else—'; and it has nothing more that it can say. What is the use of standing beside a lame man, and pointing to a shining summit, and saying to him, 'Get up there, and you will breathe a purer atmosphere'? He is lying lame at the foot of it. There is no help for any soul in law. Men are not perishing because they do not know what they ought to do. Men are not bad because they doubt as to what their duty is. The worst man in the world knows a great deal more of what he ought to do than the best man in the world practises. So it is not for want of precepts that so many of us

are going to destruction, but it is for want of power to fulfil the precepts.

Grace is love giving. Law demands, grace bestows. Law comes saying 'Do this,' and our consciences respond to the imperativeness of the obligation. But grace comes and says, 'I will help thee to do it.' Law is God requiring; grace is God bestowing. 'Give what Thou commandest, and then command what Thou wilt.'

Oh, brethren! we have all of us written upon the fleshly tablets of our hearts solemn commandments which we know are binding upon us; and which we sometimes would fain keep, but cannot. Is this not a message of hope and blessedness that comes to us? Grace has drawn near in Jesus Christ, and a giving God, who bestows upon us a life that will unfold itself in accordance with the highest law, holds out the fulness of His gift in that Incarnate Word. Law has no heart; the Gospel is the unveiling of the heart of God. Law commands; grace is God bestowing Himself.

And still further, law condemns. Grace is love that bends down to an evildoer, and deals not on the footing of strict retribution with the infirmities and the sins of us poor weaklings. And so, seeing that no man that lives but hears in his heart an accusing voice, and that every one of us knows what it is to gaze upon lofty duties that we have shrunk from, upon plain obligations from the yoke of which we have selfishly and cowardly withdrawn our necks; seeing that every man, woman, and child listening to me now has, lurking in some corner of their hearts, a memory that only needs to be quickened to be a torture, and deeds that only need to have the veil

drawn away from them to terrify and shame them—oh! surely it ought to be a word of gladness for every one of us that, in front of any law that condemns us, stands forth the gentle, gracious form of the Christ that brings pardon, and ‘the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men.’ Thank God! law needed to be ‘given,’ but it was only the foundation on which was to be reared a better thing. ‘The law was given by Moses’—‘a schoolmaster,’ as conscience is to-day, ‘to bring us to Christ’ by whom comes the grace that loves, that stoops, that gives, and that pardons.

Still further, there is another antithesis here. The Gospel which comes by Christ is not law, but truth. The object of law is to regulate conduct, and only subordinately to inform the mind or to enlighten the understanding. The Mosaic Law had for its foundation, of course, a revelation of God. But that revelation of God was less prominent, proportionately, than the prescription for man’s conduct. The Gospel is the opposite of this. It has for its object the regulation of conduct; but that object is less prominent, proportionately, than the other, the manifestation and the revelation of God. The Old Testament says ‘Thou shalt’; the New Testament says ‘God is.’ The Old was Law; the New is Truth.

And so we may draw the inference, on which I do not need to dwell, how miserably inadequate and shallow a conception of Christianity that is which sets it forth as being mainly a means of regulating conduct, and how false and foolish that loose talk is that we hear many a time.—‘Never mind about theological subtleties; conduct is the main thing.’ Not so. The Gospel is not law; the Gospel is truth. It

is a revelation of God to the understanding and to the heart, in order that thereby the will may be subdued, and that then the conduct may be shaped and moulded. But let us begin where it begins, and let us remember that the morality of the New Testament has never long been held up high and pure, where the theology of the New Testament has been neglected and despised. 'The law came by Moses; truth came by Jesus Christ.'

But, still further, let me remind you that, in the revelation of a God who is gracious, giving to our emptiness and forgiving our sins—that is to say, in the revelation of grace—we have a far deeper, nobler, more blessed conception of the divine nature than in law. It is great to think of a righteous God, it is great and ennobling to think of One whose pure eyes cannot look upon sin, and who wills that men should live pure and noble and Godlike lives. But it is far more and more blessed, transcending all the old teaching, when we sit at the feet of the Christ who gives, and who pardons, and look up into His deep eyes, with the tears of compassion shining in them, and say: 'Lo! This is our God! We have waited for Him and He will save us.' That is a better truth, a deeper truth than prophets and righteous men of old possessed; and to us there has come, borne on the wings of the mighty angel of His grace, the precious revelation of the Father-God whose heart is love. 'The law was given by Moses,' but brighter than the gleam of the presence between the Cherubim is the lambent light of gentle tenderness that shines from the face of Jesus Christ. Grace, and therefore truth, a deeper truth, came by Him.

And, still further, let me remind you of how this

contrast is borne out by the fact that all that previous system was an adumbration, a shadow and a premonition of the perfect revelation that was to come. Temple, priest, sacrifice, law, the whole body of the Mosaic constitution of things was, as it were, a shadow thrown along the road in advance by the swiftly coming King. The shadow fell before Him, but when He came the shadow disappeared. The former was a system of types, symbols, pictures. Here is the reality that antiquates and fulfils and transcends them all. 'The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

II. Now, secondly, look at the other contrast that is here, between giving and coming.

I do not know that I have quite succeeded in making clear to my own mind the precise force of this antithesis. Certainly there is a profound meaning if one can fathom it; perhaps one might put it best in something like the following fashion.

The word rendered 'came' might be more correctly translated 'became,' or 'came into being.' The law was *given*; grace and truth *came to be*.

Now, what do we mean when we talk about a law being given? We simply mean, I suppose, that it is promulgated, either in oral or in written words. It is, after all, no more than so many words. It is given when it is spoken or published. It is a verbal communication at the best. 'But grace and truth came to be.' They are realities; they are not words. They are not communicated by sentences, they are actual existences; and they spring into being as far as man's historical possession and experience of them are concerned—they spring into being in Jesus Christ, and through Him they belong to us all. Not that there

was no grace, no manifest love of God, in the world, nor any true knowledge of Him before the Incarnation, but the earlier portions of this chapter remind us that all of grace, however restrained and partial, that all of truth, however imperfect and shadowy it may have been, which were in the world before Christ came, were owing to the operation of that Eternal Word 'Who became flesh and dwelt among us,' and that these, in comparison with the affluence and the fulness and the nearness of grace and truth after Christ's coming, were so small and remote that it is not an exaggeration to say that, as far as man's possession and experience of them are concerned, the giving love of God and the clear and true knowledge of His deep heart of tenderness and grace, sprang into being with the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ the Lord.

He comes to reveal by no words. His gift is not like the gift that Moses brought down from the mountain, merely a writing upon tables; His gift is not the letter of an outward commandment, nor the letter of an outward revelation. It is the thing itself which He reveals by being it. He does not speak about grace, He brings it; He does not show us God by His words, He shows us God by His acts. He does not preach about Him, but He lives Him, He manifests Him. His gentleness, His compassion, His miracles, His wisdom, His patience, His tears, His promises; all these are the very Deity in action before our eyes; and instead of a mere verbal revelation, which is so imperfect and so worthless, grace and truth, the living realities, are flashed upon a darkened world in the face of Jesus Christ. How cold, how hard, how superficial, in comparison with that fleshly table of the

heart of Christ on which grace and truth were written, are the stony tables of law, which bore after all, for all their majesty, only words which are breath and nothing besides.

III. And so, lastly, look at the contrast that is drawn here between the persons of the Founders.

I do not suppose that we are to take into consideration the difference between the limitations of the one and the completeness of the other. I do not suppose that the Apostle was thinking about the difference between the reluctant service of the Lawgiver and the glad obedience of the Son; or between the passion and the pride that sometimes marred Moses' work, and the continual calmness and patient meekness that perfected the sacrifice of Jesus. Nor do I suppose that there flashed before his memory the difference between that strange tomb where God buried the prophet, unknown of men, in the stern solitude of the desert, true symbol of the solemn mystery and awful solitude with which the law which we have broken invests death, to our trembling consciences, and the grave in the garden with the spring flowers bursting round it, and visited by white-robed angels, who spoke comfort to weeping friends, true picture of what His death makes the grave for all His followers.

But I suppose he was mainly thinking of the contrast between the relation of Moses to his law, and of Christ to His Gospel. Moses was but a medium. His personality had nothing to do with his message. You may take away Moses, and the law stands all the same. But Christ is so interwoven with Christ's message that you cannot rend the two apart; you cannot have the figure of Christ melt away, and the gift that Christ brought remain. If you extinguish

the sun you cannot keep the sunlight; if you put away Christ in the fulness of His manhood and of His divinity, in the power of His Incarnation and the omnipotence of His cross—if you put away Christ from Christianity, it collapses into dust and nothingness.

So, dear brethren, do not let any of us try that perilous experiment. You cannot melt away Jesus and keep grace and truth. You cannot tamper with His character, with His nature, with the mystery of His passion, with the atoning power of His cross, and preserve the blessings that He has brought to the world. If you want the grace which is the unveiling of the heart of God, the gift of a giving God and the pardon of a forgiving Judge; or if you want the truth, the reality of the knowledge of Him, you can only get them by accepting Christ. '*I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Life.*' There is a 'law given which gives life,' and 'righteousness is by that law.' There is a Person who is the Truth, and our knowledge of the truth is through that Person, and through Him alone. By humble faith receive Him into your hearts, and He will come bringing to you the fulness of grace and truth.

THE WORLD'S SIN-BEARER

'The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'—JOHN I. 29.

OUR Lord, on returning from His temptation in the wilderness, came straight to John the Baptist. He was welcomed with these wonderful and rapturous words, familiarity with which has deadened our sense of their greatness. How audacious they would sound to some of their first hearers! Think of these two,

one of them a young Galilean carpenter, to whom His companion witnesses and declares that He is of world-wide and infinite significance. It was the first public designation of Jesus Christ, and it throws into exclusive prominence one aspect of His work.

John the Baptist summing up the whole of former revelation which concentrated in Him, pointed a designating finger to Jesus and said, 'That is He!' My text is the sum of all Christian teaching ever since. My task, and that of all preachers, if we understand it aright, is but to repeat the same message, and to concentrate attention on the same fact—'The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' It is the one thing needful for you, dear friend, to believe. It is the truth that we all need most of all. There is no reason for our being gathered together now, except that I may beseech you to behold for yourselves the Lamb of God which takes away the world's sin.

I. Now let me ask you to note, first, that Jesus Christ is the world's sin-bearer.

The significance of the first clause of my text, 'the Lamb of God,' is deplorably weakened if it is taken to mean only, or mainly, that Jesus Christ, in the sweetness of His human nature, is gentle and meek and patient and innocent and pure. It *does* mean all that thank God! But it was no mere description of Christ's disposition which John the Baptist conceived himself to be uttering, as is clear by the words that follow in the next clause. His reason for selecting (under divine guidance, as I believe) that image of 'the Lamb of God,' went a great deal deeper than anything in the temper of the Person of whom he was speaking. Many streams of ancient prophecy and ritual converge

upon this emblem, and if we want to understand what is meant by the designation 'the Lamb of God,' we must not content ourselves with the sentimentalisms which some superficial teachers have supposed to exhaust the significance of the expression; but we must submit to be led back by John, who was the summing up of all the ancient Revelation, to the sources in that Revelation from which he drew this metaphor.

First and chiefest of these, as I take it, are the words which no Jew ever doubted referred to the Messiah, until after He had come, and the Rabbis would not believe in Him, and so were bound to hunt up another interpretation—I mean the great words in the prophecy which, I suppose, is familiar to most of us, where there are found two representations, one, 'He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth'; and the other, still more germane to the purpose of my text, 'the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . By His knowledge shall He justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.' John the Baptist, looking back through the ages to that ancient prophetic utterance, points to the young Man standing by his side, and says, 'There it is fulfilled.'

But the prophetic symbol of the Lamb, and the thought that He bore the iniquity of the many, had their roots in the past, and pointed back to the sacrificial lamb, the lamb of the daily sacrifice, and especially to the lamb slain at the Passover, which was an emblem and sacrament of deliverance from bondage. Thus the conceptions of vicarious suffering, and of a death which is a deliverance, and of blood which, sprinkled on the doorposts, guards the house from the destroying angel, are all gathered into these words.

Nor do these exhaust the sources of this figure, as it comes from the venerable and sacred past. For when we read 'the Lamb of God,' who is there that does not recognise, unless his eyes are blinded by obstinate prejudice, a glance backward to that sweet and pathetic story when the father went up with his son to the top of Mount Moriah, and to the boy's question, 'Where is the lamb?' answered, 'My son, God Himself will provide the lamb!' John says, 'Behold the Lamb that God has provided, the Sacrifice, on whom is laid a world's sins, and who bears them away.'

Note, too, the universality of the power of Christ's sacrificial work. John does not say 'the sins,' as the Litany, following an imperfect translation, makes him say. But he says, 'the sin of the world,' as if the whole mass of human transgression was bound together, in one black and awful bundle, and laid upon the unshrinking shoulders of this better Atlas who can bear it all, and bear it all away. Your sin, and mine, and every man's, they were all laid upon Jesus Christ.

Now remember, dear brethren, that in this wondrous representation there lie, plain and distinct, two things which to me, and I pray they may be to you, are the very foundation of the Gospel to which we have to trust. One is that on Christ Jesus, in His life and in His death, were laid the guilt and the consequences of a world's sin. I do not profess to be ready with an explanation of how that is possible. That it is a fact I believe, on the authority of Christ Himself and of Scripture; that it is inconsistent with the laws of human nature may be asserted, but never can be proved. Theories manifold have been invented in order to make it plain. I do not know that any of them have gone to the bottom of the bottomless. But

Christ in His perfect manhood, wedded, as I believe it is, to true divinity, is capable of entering into—not merely by sympathy, though that has much to do with it—such closeness of relation with human kind, and with every man, as that on Him can be laid the iniquity of us all.

Oh, brethren! what was the meaning of ‘I have a baptism to be baptized with,’ unless the cold waters of the flood into which He unshrinkingly stepped, and allowed to flow over Him, were made by the gathered accumulation of the sins of the whole world? What was the meaning of the agony in Gethsemane? What was the meaning of that most awful word ever spoken by human lips, in which the consciousness of union with, and of separation from, God, were so marvellously blended, ‘My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ unless the Guiltless was then loaded with the sins of the world, which rose between Him and God?

Dear friends, it seems to me that unless this transcendent element be fairly recognised as existing in the passion and death of Jesus Christ, His demeanour when He came to die was far less heroic and noble and worthy of imitation than have been the deaths of hundreds of people who drew all their strength to die from Him. I do not venture to bring a theory, but I press upon you the fact, He bears the sins of the world, and in that awful load are yours and mine.

There is the other truth here, as clearly, and perhaps more directly, meant by the selection of the expression in my text, that the Sin-bearer not only carries, but carries *away*, the burden that is laid upon Him. Perhaps there may be a reference—in addition to the other sources of the figure which I have indicated as existing in ritual, and prophecy, and history—there

may be a reference in the words to yet another of the eloquent symbols of that ancient system which enshrined truths that were not peculiar to any people, but were the property of humanity. You remember, no doubt, the singular ceremonial connected with the scapegoat, and many of you will recall the wonderful embodiment of it given by the Christian genius of a modern painter. The sins of the nation were symbolically laid upon its head, and it was carried out to the edge of the wilderness and driven forth to wander alone, bearing away upon itself into the darkness and solitude—far from man and far from God—the whole burden of the nation's sins. Jesus Christ takes away the sin which He bears, and there is, as I believe, only one way by which individuals, or society, or the world at large, can thoroughly get rid of the guilt and penal consequences and of the dominion of sin, and that is, by beholding the Lamb of God that takes upon Himself, that He may carry away out of sight, the sin of the world. So much, then, for the first thought that I wish to suggest to you.

II. Now let me ask you to look with me at a second thought, that such a world's Sin-bearer is the world's deepest need.

The sacrifices of every land witness to the fact that humanity all over the world, and through all the ages, and under all varieties of culture, has been dimly conscious that its deepest need was that the fact of sin should be dealt with. I know that there are plenty of modern ingenious ways of explaining the universal prevalence of an altar and a sacrifice, and the slaying of innocent creatures, on other grounds, some of which I think it is not uncharitable to suppose are in favour mainly because they weaken this branch of the

evidence for the conformity of Christian truth with human necessities. But notwithstanding these, I venture to affirm, with all proper submission to wiser men, that you cannot legitimately explain the universal prevalence of sacrifice, unless you take into account as one—I should say the main—element in it, this universally diffused sense that things are wrong between man and the higher Power, and need to be set right even by such a method.

But I do not need to appeal only to this world-wide fact as being a declaration of what man's deepest need is. I would appeal to every man's own consciousness—hard though it be to get at it; buried as it is, with some of us, under mountains of indifference and neglect; and callous as it is with many of us by reason of indulgence in habits of evil. I believe that in every one of us, if we will be honest, and give heed to the inward voice, there does echo a response and an amen to the Scripture declaration, 'God hath shut up all under sin.' I ask you about yourselves, is it not so? Do you not know that, however you may gloss over the thing, or forget it amidst a whirl of engagements and occupations, or try to divert your thoughts into more or less noble or ignoble channels of pleasures and pursuits, there does lie, in each of our hearts, the sense, dormant often, but sometimes like a snake in its hybernation, waking up enough to move, and sometimes enough to sting—there does lie, in each of us, the consciousness that we are wrong with God, and need something to put us right?

And, brethren, let modern philanthropists of all sorts take this lesson: The thing that the world wants is to have sin dealt with—dealt with in the way of conscious forgiveness; dealt with in the way of drying

up its source, and delivering men from the power of it. Unless you do that, I do not say you do nothing, but you pour a bottle full of cold water into Vesuvius, and try to put the fire out with that. You may educate, you may cultivate, you may refine; you may set political and economical arrangements right in accordance with the newest notions of the century, and what then? Why! the old thing will just begin over again, and the old miseries will appear again, because the old grandmother of them all is there, the sin that has led to them.

Now do not misunderstand me, as if I were warring against good and noble men who are trying to remedy the world's evils by less thorough methods than Christ's Gospel. They will do a great deal. But you may have high education, beautiful refinement of culture and manners; you may divide out political power in accordance with the most democratic notions; you may give everybody 'a living wage,' however extravagant his notions of a living wage may be. You may carry out all these panaceas and the world will groan still, because you have not dealt with the tap-root of all the mischief. You cannot cure an internal cancer with a plaster upon the little finger, and you will never stanch the world's wounds until you go to the Physician that has balm and bandage, even Jesus Christ, that takes away the sins of the world. I profoundly distrust all these remedies for the world's misery as in themselves inadequate, even whilst I would help them all, and regard them all as then blessed and powerful, when they are consequences and secondary results of the Gospel, the first task of which is to deal by forgiveness and by cleansing with individual transgression.

And if I might venture to go a step further, I would like to say that this aspect of our Lord's work on which John the Baptist concentrated all our attention is the only one which gives Him power to sway men, and which makes the Gospel—the record of His work—the kingly power in the world that it is meant to be. Depend upon it, that in the measure in which Christian teachers fail to give supreme importance to that aspect of Christ's work they fail altogether. There are many other aspects which, as I have just said, follow in my conception from this first one; but if, as is obviously the tendency in many quarters to-day, Christianity be thought of as being mainly a means of social improvement, or if its principles of action be applied to life without that basis of them all, in the Cross which takes away the world's iniquity, then it needs no prophet to foretell that such a Christianity will only have superficial effects, and that, in losing sight of this central thought, it will have cast away all its power.

I beseech you, dear brethren, remember that Jesus Christ is something more than a social reformer, though He is the first of them, and the only one whose work will last. Jesus Christ is something more than a lovely pattern of human conduct, though He is that. Jesus Christ is something more than a great religious genius who set forth the Fatherhood of God as it had never been set forth before. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the record not only of what He said but of what He *did*, not only that He lived but that He died; and all His other powers, and all His other benefits and blessings to society, come as results of His dealing with the individual soul when He takes away its guilt and reconciles it to God.

III. And so, lastly, let me ask you to notice that this

Sin-bearer of the world is our Sin-bearer if we 'behold' Him.

John was simply summoning ignorant eyes to look, and telling of what they would see. But his call is susceptible, without violence, of a far deeper meaning. This is really the one truth that I want to press upon you, dear friends—'Behold the Lamb of God!'

What is that beholding? Surely it is nothing else than our recognising in Him the great and blessed work which I have been trying to describe, and then resting ourselves upon that great Lord and sufficient Sacrifice. And such an exercise of simple trust is well named beholding, because they who believe do see, with a deeper and a truer vision than sense can give. You and I can see Christ more really than these men who stood round Him, and to whom His flesh was 'a veil'—as the Epistle to the Hebrews calls it—hiding His true divinity and work. They who thus behold by faith lack nothing either of the directness or of the certitude that belong to vision. 'Seeing is believing,' says the cynical proverb. The Christian version inverts its terms, 'Believing is seeing.' 'Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice.'

And your simple act of 'beholding,' by the recognition of His work and the resting of yourself upon it, makes the world's Sin-bearer your Sin-bearer. You appropriate the general blessing, like a man taking in a little piece of a boundless prairie for his very own. Your possession does not make my possession of Him less, for every eye gets its own beam, and however many eyes wait upon Him, they all receive the light on to their happy eyeballs. You can make Christ your own, and have all that He has done for the world as

your possession, and can experience in your own hearts the sense of your own forgiveness and deliverance from the power and guilt of your own sin, on the simple condition of looking unto Jesus. The serpent is lifted on the pole, the dying camp cannot go to it, but the flaming eyes of the man in his last gasp may turn to the gleaming image hanging on high; and as he looks the health begins to tingle back into his veins, and he is healed.

And so, dear brethren, behold Him; for unless you do, though He has borne the world's sin, your sin will not be there, but will remain on your back to crush you down. 'O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon *me*!'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: I. JOHN AND ANDREW

'And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou? 39. He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.'—JOHN I. 37-39.

In these verses we see the head waters of a great river, for we have before us nothing less than the beginnings of the Christian Church. So simply were the first disciples made. The great society of believers was born like its Master, unostentatiously and in a corner.

Jesus has come back from His conflict in the wilderness after His baptism, and has presented Himself before John the Baptist for his final attestation. It was a great historical moment when the last of the Prophets stood face to face with the Fulfilment of all prophecy. In his words. 'Behold the Lamb of God

which taketh away the sin of the world!’ Jewish prophecy sang its swan-song, uttered its last rejoicing, ‘Eureka! I have found Him!’ and died as it spoke.

We do not sufficiently estimate the magnificent self-suppression and unselfishness of the Baptist, in that he, with his own lips, here repeats his testimony in order to point his disciples away from himself, and to attach them to Jesus. If he could have been touched by envy he would not so gladly have recognised it as his lot to decrease while Jesus increased. Rare magnanimity that in a teacher! The two who hear John’s words are Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, and an anonymous man. The latter is probably the Evangelist. For it is remarkable that we never find the names of James and John in this Gospel (though from the other Gospels we know how closely they were associated with our Lord), and that we only find them referred to as ‘the sons of Zebedee,’ once near the close of the book. That fact points, I think, in the direction of John’s authorship of this Gospel.

These two, then, follow behind Jesus, fancying themselves unobserved, not desiring to speak to Him, and probably with some notion of tracking Him to His home, in order that they may seek an interview at a later period. But He who notices the first beginnings of return to Him, and always comes to meet men, and is better to them than their wishes, will not let them steal behind Him uncheered, nor leave them to struggle with diffidence and delay. So He turns to them, and the events ensue which I have read in the verses that follow as my text.

We have, I think, three things especially to notice here. First, the Master’s question to the whole world, ‘What seek ye?’ Second, the Master’s invitation to

the whole world, 'Come and see!' Lastly, the personal communion which brings men's hearts to Him, 'They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.'

I. So, then, first look at this question of Christ to the whole world, 'What seek ye?'

As it stands, on its surface, and in its primary application, it is the most natural of questions. Our Lord hears footsteps behind Him, and, as any one would do, turns about, with the question which any one would ask, 'What is it that you want?' That question would derive all its meaning from the look with which it was accompanied, and the tone in which it was spoken. It might mean either annoyance and rude repulsion of a request, even before it was presented, or it might mean a glad wish to draw out the petition, and more than half a pledge to bestow it. All depends on the smile with which it was asked and the intonation of voice which carried it to their ears. And if we had been there we should have felt, as these two evidently felt, that though in form a question, it was in reality a promise, and that it drew out their shy wishes, made them conscious to themselves of what they desired, and gave them confidence that their desire would be granted. Clearly it had sunk very deep into the Evangelist's mind; and now, at the end of his life, when his course is nearly run, the never-to-be-forgotten voice sounds still in his memory, and he sees again, in sunny clearness, all the scene that had transpired on that day by the fords of the Jordan. The first words and the last words of those whom we have learned to love are cut deep on our hearts.

It was not an accident that the first words which the Master spoke in His Messianic office were this pro-

foundly significant question, 'What seek ye?' He asks it of us all, He asks it of us to-day. Well for them who can answer, 'Rabbi! where dwellest *Thou*?' 'It is Thou whom we seek!' So, venturing to take the words in that somewhat wider application, let me just suggest to you two or three directions in which they seem to point.

First, the question suggests to us this: the need of having a clear consciousness of what is our object in life. The most of men have never answered that question. They live from hand to mouth, driven by circumstances, guided by accidents, impelled by unreflecting passions and desires, knowing what they want for the moment, but never having tried to shape the course of their lives into a consistent whole, so as to stand up before God in Christ when He puts the question to them, 'What seek ye?' and to answer the question.

These incoherent, instinctive, unreflective lives that so many of you are living are a shame to your manhood, to say nothing more. God has made us for something else than that we should thus be the sport of circumstances. It is a disgrace to any of us that our lives should be like some little fishing-boat, with an unskilful or feeble hand at the tiller, yawing from one point of the compass to another, and not keeping a straight and direct course. I pray you, dear brethren, to front this question: 'After all, and at bottom, what is it I am living for? Can I formulate the aims and purposes of my life in any intelligible statement of which I should not be ashamed?' Some of you are not ashamed to *do* what you would be very much ashamed to say, and you practically answer the question, 'What are you seeking?' by pursuits that you durst not call by their own ugly names.

There may be many of us who are living for our lusts, for our passions, for our ambitions, for avarice, who are living in all uncleanness and godlessness. I do not know. There are plenty of shabby, low aims in all of us which do not bear being dragged out into the light of day. I beseech you to try and get hold of the ugly things and bring them up to the surface, however much they may seek to hide in the congenial obscurity and twist their slimy coils round something in the dark. If you dare not put your life's object into words, bethink yourselves whether it ought to be your life's object at all.

Ah, brethren! if we would ask ourselves this question, and answer it with any thoroughness, we should not make so many mistakes as to the places where we look for the things for which we are seeking. If we knew what we were really seeking, we should know where to go to look for it. Let me tell you what you are seeking, whether you know it or not. You are seeking for rest for your heart, a home for your spirits; you are seeking for perfect truth for your understandings, perfect beauty for your affections, perfect goodness for your conscience. You are seeking for all these three, gathered into one white beam of light, and you are seeking for it all in a Person. Many of you do not know this, and so you go hunting in all manner of impossible places for that which you can only find in one. To the question, 'What seek ye?' the deepest of all answers, the only real answer, is, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' If you know that, you know where to look for what you need! 'Do men gather grapes of thorns?' If these are really the things that you are seeking after, in all your mistaken search—oh! how mistaken is the search! Do man

look for pearls in cockle-shells, or for gold in coal-pits; and why should you look for rest of heart, mind, conscience, spirit, anywhere and in anything short of God? 'What seek ye?'—the only answer is, 'We seek Thee!'

And then, still further, let me remind you how these words are not only a question, but are really a veiled and implied promise. The question, 'What do you want of Me?' may either strike an intending suppliant like a blow, and drive him away with his prayer sticking in his throat unspoken, or it may sound like a merciful invitation, 'What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be granted unto thee?' We know which of the two it was here. Christ asks all such questions as this (and there are many of them in the New Testament), not for His information, but for our strengthening. He asks people, not because He does not know before they answer, but that, on the one hand, their own minds may be clear as to their wishes, and so they may wish the more earnestly because of the clearness; and that, on the other hand, their desires being expressed, they may be the more able to receive the gift which He is willing to bestow. So He here turns to these men, whose purpose He knew well enough, and says to them, 'What seek ye? Herein He is doing the very same thing on a lower level, and in an outer sphere, as is done when He appoints that we shall pray for the blessings which He is yearning to bestow, but which He makes conditional on our supplications, only because by these supplications our hearts are opened to a capacity for receiving them.

We have, then, in the words before us, thus understood, our Lord's gracious promise to give what is

desired on the simple condition that the suppliant is conscious of his own wants, and turns to Him for the supply of them. 'What seek ye?' It is a blank cheque that He puts into their hands to fill up. It is the key of His treasure-house which He offers to us all, with the assured confidence that if we open it we shall find all that we need.

Who is He that thus stands up before a whole world of seeking, restless spirits, and fronts them with the question which is a pledge, conscious of His capacity to give to each of them what each of them requires? Who is this that professes to be able to give all these men and women and children bread here in the wilderness? There is only one answer—the Christ of God.

And He has done what He promises. No man or woman ever went to Him, and answered this question, and presented their petition for any real good, and was refused. No man can ask from Christ what Christ cannot bestow. No man can ask from Christ what Christ will not bestow. In the loftiest region, the region of inward and spiritual gifts, which are the best gifts, we can get everything that we want, and our only limit is, not His boundless omnipotence and willingness, but our own poor, narrow, and shrivelled desires. 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.'

Christ stands before us, if I may so say, like some of those fountains erected at some great national festival, out of which pour for all the multitude every variety of draught which they desire, and each man that goes with his empty cup gets it filled, and gets it filled with that which he wishes. 'What seek ye?' Wisdom? You students, you thinkers, you young men that are

fighting with intellectual difficulties and perplexities, 'What seek ye?' Truth? He gives us that. You others, 'What seek ye?' Love, peace, victory, self-control, hope, anodyne for sorrow? Whatever you desire, you will find in Jesus Christ. The first words with which He broke the silence when He spake to men as the Messiah, were at once a searching question, probing their aims and purposes, and a gracious promise pledging Him to a task not beyond His power, however far beyond that of all others, even the task of giving to each man his heart's desire. 'What seek ye?' 'Seek, and ye shall find.'

II. Then, still further, notice how, in a similar fashion, we may regard here the second words which our Lord speaks as being His merciful invitation to the world. 'Come and see.'

The disciples' answer was simple and timid. They did not venture to say, 'May we talk to you?' 'Will you take us to be your disciples?' All they can muster courage to ask now is, 'Where dwellest Thou?' At another time, perhaps, we will go to this Rabbi and speak with Him. His answer is, 'Come, come now; come, and by intercourse with Me learn to know Me.' His temporary home was probably nothing more than some selected place on the river's bank, for 'He had not where to lay His head'; but such as it was, He welcomes them to it. 'Come and see!'

Take a plain, simple truth out of that. Christ is always glad when people resort to Him. When He was here in the world, no hour was inconvenient or inopportune; no moment was too much occupied; no physical wants of hunger, or thirst, or slumber were ever permitted to come between Him and seeking hearts. He was never impatient. He was never wearied

of speaking, though He was often wearied in speaking. He never denied Himself to any one or said, 'I have something else to do than to attend to you.' And just as in literal fact, whilst He was here upon earth, nothing was ever permitted to hinder His drawing near to any man who wanted to draw near to Him, so nothing now hinders it; and He is glad when any of us resort to Him and ask Him to let us speak to Him and be with Him. His weariness or occupation never shut men out from Him then. His glory does not shut them out now.

Then there is another thought here. This invitation of the Master is also a very distinct call to a first-hand knowledge of Jesus Christ. Andrew and John had heard from the Baptist about Him, and now what He bids them to do is to come and hear Himself. That is what He calls you, dear brethren, to do. Do not listen to us, let the Master Himself speak to you. Many who reject Christianity reject it through not having listened to Jesus Himself teaching them, but only to theologians and other human representations of the truth. Go and ask Christ to speak to you with His own lips of truth, and take Him as the Expositor of His own system. Do not be contented with traditional talk and second-hand information. Go to Christ, and hear what He Himself has to say to you.

Then, still further, in this 'Come and see' there is a distinct call to the personal act of faith. Both of these words, 'come' and 'see,' are used in the New Testament as standing emblems of faith. Coming to Christ is trusting Him; trusting Him is seeing Him, looking unto Him. 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.' There are two metaphors, both of them

pointing to one thing, and that one thing is the invitation from the dear lips of the loving Lord to every man, woman, and child in this congregation. 'Come and see!' 'Put your trust in Me, draw near to Me by desire and penitence, draw near to Me in the fixed thought of your mind, in the devotion of your will, in the trust of your whole being. Come to Me, and see Me by faith; and then—and then—your hearts will have found what they seek, and your weary quest will be over, and, like the dove, you will fold your wings and nestle at the foot of the Cross, and rest for evermore. Come! "Come and see!"'

III. So, lastly, we have in these words a parable of the blessed experience which binds men's hearts to Jesus for ever. 'They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.'

'Dwelt' and 'abode' are the same words in the original. It is one of John's favourite words, and in its deepest meaning expresses the close, still communion which the soul may have with Jesus Christ, which communion, on that never-to-be-forgotten day, when he and Andrew sat with Him in the quiet, confidential fellowship that disclosed Christ's glory 'full of grace and truth' to their hearts, made them His for ever.

If the reckoning of time here is made according to the Hebrew fashion, the 'tenth hour' will be ten o'clock in the morning. So, one long day of talk! If it be according to the Roman legal fashion, the hour will be four o'clock in the afternoon, which would only give time for a brief conversation before the night fell. But, in any case, sacred reserve is observed as to what passed in that interview. A lesson for a great deal of

blatant talk, in this present day, about conversion and the details thereof!

‘Not easily forgiven

Are those, who setting wide the doors, that bar
The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
Let in the day.’

John had nothing to say to the world about what the Master said to him and his brother in that long day of communion.

One plain conclusion from this last part of our narrative is that the impression of Christ's own personality is the strongest force to make disciples. The character of Jesus Christ is, after all, the central and standing evidence and the mightiest credential of Christianity. It bears upon its face the proof of its own truthfulness. If such a character was not lived, how did it ever come to be described, and described by such people? And if it was lived, how did it come to be so? The historical veracity of the character of Jesus Christ is guaranteed by its very uniqueness. And the divine origin of Jesus Christ is forced upon us as the only adequate explanation of His historical character. ‘Truly this man was the Son of God.’

I believe that to lift Him up is the work of all Christian preachers and teachers; as far as they can to hide themselves behind Jesus Christ, or at the most to let themselves appear, just as the old painters used to let their own likenesses appear in their great altar-pieces—a little kneeling figure there, away in a dark corner of the background. Present Christ, and He will vindicate His own character; He will vindicate His own nature; He will vindicate His own gospel. ‘They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him,’ and the

end of it was that they abode with Him for evermore. And so it will always be.

Once more, personal experience of the grace and sweetness of this Saviour binds men to Him as nothing else will :

‘He must be loved ere that to you
He will seem worthy of your love.’

The deepest and sweetest and most precious part of His character and of His gifts can only be known on condition of possessing Him and them, and they can be possessed only on condition of holding fellowship with Him. I do not say to any man : ‘Try trust in order to be sure that Jesus Christ is worthy to be trusted,’ for by its very nature faith cannot be an experiment or provisional. I do not say that my experience is evidence to you, but at the same time I do say that it is worth any man’s while to reflect upon this, that none who ever trusted in Him have been put to shame. No man has looked to Jesus and has said : ‘Ah ! I have found Him out ! His help is vain, His promises empty.’ Many men have fallen away from Him, I know, but not because they have proved Him untruthful, but because they have become unfaithful.

And so, dear brethren, I come to you with the old message, ‘Oh ! taste,’ and thus you will ‘see that the Lord is good.’ There must be the faith first, and then there will be the experience, which will make anything seem to you more credible than that He whom you have loved and trusted, and who has answered your love and your trust, should be anything else than the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. Come to Him and you will see. The impregnable argument will be put into your mouth—‘Whether this man be a sinner or no, I

know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' Look to Him, listen to Him, and when He asks you, 'What seek ye?' answer, 'Rabbi, where dwellest Thou? It is Thou whom I seek.' He will welcome you to close blessed intercourse with Him, which will knit you to Him with cords that cannot be broken, and with His loving voice making music in memory and heart, you will be able triumphantly to confess—'Now we believe, not because of any man's saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: II. SIMON PETER

'One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.' —JOHN I. 40-42.

THERE are many ways by which souls are brought to their Saviour. Sometimes, like the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, men seek Him earnestly and find Him. Sometimes, by the intervention of another, the knowledge of Him is kindled in dark hearts. Sometimes He Himself takes the initiative, and finds those that seek Him not. We have illustrations of all these various ways in these simple records of the gathering in of the first disciples. Andrew and his friend, with whom we were occupied in our last sermon, looked for Christ and found Him. Peter, with whom we have to do now, was brought to Christ by his brother; and the third of the group, consisting of Philip, was sought by Christ while he was not thinking of Him, and found

an unsought treasure; and then Philip again, like Andrew, finds a friend, and brings him to Christ.

Each of the incidents has its own lesson, and each of them adds something to the elucidation of John's two great subjects: the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God, and the development of that faith in Him which gives us life. It may be profitable to consider each group in succession, and mark the various aspects of these two subjects presented by each.

In this incident, then, we have two things mainly to consider: first, the witness of the disciple; second, the self-revelation of the Master.

I. The witness of the disciple.

We have seen that the unknown companion of Andrew was probably the Evangelist himself, who, in accordance with his uniform habit, suppresses his own name, and that that omission points to John's authorship of this Gospel. Another morsel of evidence as to the date and purpose of the Gospel lies in the mention here of Andrew as 'Simon Peter's brother.' We have not yet heard anything about Simon Peter. The Evangelist has never mentioned his name, and yet he takes it for granted that his hearers knew all about Peter, and knew him better than they did Andrew. That presupposes a considerable familiarity with the incidents of the Gospel story, and is in harmony with the theory that this fourth Gospel is the latest of the four, and was written for the purpose of supplementing, not of repeating, their narrative. Hence a number of the phenomena of the Gospel, which have troubled critics, are simply and sufficiently explained.

But that by the way. Passing that, notice first the illustration that we get here of how instinctive and natural the impulse is, when a man has found Jesus

Christ, to tell some one else about Him. Nobody said to Andrew, 'Go and look for your brother,' and yet, as soon as he had fairly realised the fact that this Man standing before him was the Messiah, though the evening seems to have come, he hurries away to find his brother, and share with him the glad conviction.

Now, that is always the case. If a man has any real depth of conviction, he cannot rest till he tries to share it with somebody else. Why, even a dog that has had its leg mended, will bring other limping dogs to the man that was kind to it. Whoever really believes anything becomes a propagandist.

Look round about us to-day! and hearken to the Babel, the wholesale Babel of noises, where every sort of opinion is trying to make itself heard. It sounds like a country fair where every huckster is shouting his loudest. That shows that the men believe the things that they profess. Thank God that there is so much earnestness in the world! And now are Christians to be dumb whilst all this vociferous crowd is calling its wares, and quacks are standing on their platforms shouting out their specifics, which are mostly delusions? Have you not a medicine that will cure everything, a real heal-all, a veritable pain-killer? If you believe that you have, certainly you will never rest till you share your boon with your brethren.

If the natural effect of all earnest conviction, viz. a yearning and an absolute necessity to speak it out, is no part of your Christian experience, very grave inferences ought to be drawn from that. This man, before he was four-and-twenty hours a disciple, had made another. Some of you have been disciples for as many years, and have never even tried to make one.

Whence comes that silence which is, alas, so common among us?

It is very plain that, making all allowance for changed manners, for social difficulties, for timidity, for the embarrassment that besets people when they talk to other people about religion, which is 'such an awkward subject to introduce into mixed company,' and the like,—making all allowance for these, there is a deplorable number of Christian people who ought to be, in their own circles, evangelists and missionaries, who are, if I may venture to quote very rude words which the Bible uses, 'Dumb dogs lying down, and loving to slumber.' 'He first findeth his own brother, Simon!'

Now, take another lesson out of this witness of the disciple, as to the channel in which such effort naturally runs. 'He *first* findeth *his own brother*'; does not that imply a second finding by the other of the two? The language of the text suggests that the Evangelist's tendency to the suppression of himself, of which I have spoken, hides away, if I may so say, in this singular expression, the fact that he too went to look for a brother, but that Andrew found his brother before John found his. If so, each of the original pair of disciples went to look for one who was knit to him by close ties of kindred and affection, and found him and brought him to Christ; and before the day was over the Christian Church was doubled, because each member of it, by God's grace, had added another. Home, then, and those who are nearest to us, present the natural channels for Christian work. Many a very earnest and busy preacher, or Sunday-school teacher, or missionary, has brothers and sisters, husband or wife, children or parents at home to whom he has

never said a word about Christ. There is an old proverb, 'The shoemaker's wife is always the worst shod.' The families of many very busy Christian teachers suffer wofully for want of remembering 'he first findeth his own brother.' It is a poor affair if all your philanthropy and Christian energy go off noisily in Sunday-schools and mission-stations, and if your own vineyard is neglected, and the people at your own fire-side never hear anything from you about the Master whom you say you love. Some of you want that hint; will you take it?

But then, the principle is one that might be fairly expanded beyond the home circle. The natural relationships into which we are brought by neighbourhood and by ordinary associations prescribe the direction of our efforts. What, for instance, are we set down in this swarming population of Lancashire for? For business and personal ends? Yes, partly. But is that all? Surely, if we believe that 'there is a divinity that shapes our ends' and determines the bounds of our habitation, we must believe that other purposes affecting other people are also meant by God to be accomplished through us, and that where a man who knows and loves Christ Jesus is brought into neighbourly contact with thousands who do not, he is thereby constituted his brethren's keeper, and is as plainly called to tell them of Christ as if a voice from Heaven had bid him do it. What is to be said of the depth and vital energy of the Christianity that neither hears the call nor feels the impulse to share its blessing with the famishing Lazarus at its gate? What will be the fate of such a church? Why, if you live in luxury in your own well drained and ventilated house, and take no heed to the typhoid fever or cholera in the slums at

its back, the chances are that seeds of the disease will find their way to you, and kill your wife, or child, or yourself. And if you Christian people, living in the midst of godless people, do not try to heal them, they will infect you. If you do not seek to impress your conviction that Christ is the Messiah upon an unbelieving generation, the unbelieving generation will impress upon you its doubts whether He is; and your lips will falter, and a pallor will come over the complexion of your love, and your faith will become congealed and turn into ice.

Notice again the simple word which is the most powerful means of influencing most men.

Andrew did not begin to argue with his brother. Some of us can do that and some of us cannot. Some of us are influenced by argument and some of us are not. You may pound a man's mistaken creed to atoms with sledge-hammers of reasoning, and he is not much the nearer being a Christian than he was before; just as you may pound ice to pieces and it is pounded ice after all. The mightiest argument that we can use, and the argument that we can all use, if we have got any religion in us at all, is that of Andrew, 'We have found the Messiah.'

I recently read a story in some newspaper or other about a minister who preached a very elaborate course of lectures in refutation of some form of infidelity, for the special benefit of a man that attended his place of worship. Soon after, the man came and declared himself a Christian. The minister said to him, 'Which of my discourses was it that removed your doubts?' The reply was, 'Oh! it was not any of your sermons that influenced me. The thing that set me thinking was that a poor woman

came out of the chapel beside me, and stumbled on the steps, and I stretched out my hand to help her, and she said "Thank you!" Then she looked at me and said, "Do you love Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour?" And I did not, and I went home and thought about it; and now I can say *I love Jesus.*' The poor woman's word, and her frank confession of her experience, were all the transforming power.

If you have found Christ, you can say that you have. Never mind about the how! Any how! Only say it! A boy that is sent on an errand by his father has only one duty to perform, and that is to repeat what he was told. Whether we have any eloquence or not, whether we have any logic or not, whether we can speak persuasively and gracefully or not, if we have laid hold of Christ at all we can say that we have; and it is at our peril that we do not. We can say it to somebody. There is surely some one who will listen to you more readily than to any one else. Surely you have not lived all your life and bound nobody to you by kindness and love, so that they will gladly attend to what you say. Well, then, *use* the power that is given to you.

Remember the beginnings of the Christian Church—two men, each of whom found his brother. Two and two make four; and if every one of us would go, according to the old law of warfare, and each of us slay our man, or rather each of us give life by God's grace to some one, or try to do it, our congregations and our churches would grow as fast as, according to the old problem, the money grew that was paid down for the nails in the horse's shoes. Two snowflakes on the top of a mountain gather an avalanche by the time

they reach the valley. 'He first findeth his brother, Simon.'

II. And now I turn to the second part of this text, the self-revelation of the Master.

The bond which knit these men to Christ at first was by no means the perfect Christian faith which they afterwards attained. They recognised Him as the Messiah, they were personally attached to Him, they were ready to accept His teaching and to obey His commandments. That was about as far as they had gone. But they were scholars. They had entered the school. The rest would come. It would be absurd to expect that Christ would begin by preaching to them faith in His divinity and atoning work. He binds them to *Himself*. That is lesson enough for a beginner for one day.

It was the impression which Christ Himself made on Simon which completed the work begun by his brother. What, then, was the impression? He comes all full of wonder and awe, and he is met by a look and a sentence. The look, which is described by an unusual word, was a penetrating gaze which regarded Peter with fixed attention. It must have been remarkable, to have lived in John's memory for all these years. Evidently, as I think, a more than natural insight is implied. So, also, the saying with which our Lord received Peter seems to me to be meant to show more than natural knowledge: 'Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas.' Christ may, no doubt, have learned the Apostle's name and lineage from his brother, or in some other ordinary way. But if you observe the similar incident which follows in the conversation with Nicodemus, and the emphatic declaration of the next chapter that Jesus knew both 'all men,' and 'what

was in man'—both human nature as a whole, and each individual—it is more natural to see here superhuman knowledge.

So then, the first point in our Lord's self-revelation here is that He shows Himself possessed of supernatural and thorough knowledge. One remembers the many instances where our Lord read men's hearts, and the prayer addressed to Him probably, by Peter, 'Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men,' and the vision which John saw of 'eyes like a flame of fire,' and the sevenfold 'I know thy works.'

It may be a very awful thought, 'Thou, God, seest me.' It is a very unwelcome thought to a great many men, and it will be so to us unless we can give it the modification which it receives from the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and feel sure that the eyes which are blazing with divine omniscience are dewy with divine and human love.

Do you believe it? Do you feel that Christ is looking at you, and searching you altogether? Do you rejoice in it? Do you carry it about with you as a consolation and a strength in moments of weakness and in times of temptation? Is it as blessed to you to feel 'Thou Christ beholdest me now,' as it is for a child to feel that, when it is playing in the garden, its mother is sitting up at the window watching it, and that no harm can come? There have been men driven mad in prisons because they knew that somewhere in the wall there was a little pinhole, through which a gaoler's eye was always, or might be always, glaring down at them. And the thought of an absolute Omniscience up there, searching me to the depths of my nature may become one from which I recoil shuddering and will not be altogether a blessed one unless it con

to me in this shape:—‘My Christ knows me altogether and loves me better than He knows. And so I will spread myself out before Him, and though I feel that there is much in me which I dare not tell to men, I will rejoice that there is nothing which I need to tell to Him. He knows me through* and through. He knew me when He died for me. He knew me when He forgave me. He knew me when He undertook to cleanse me. Like this very Peter I will say, “Lord, Thou knowest all things,” and, like him, I will cling the closer to His feet, because I know, and He knows, my weakness and my sin.’

Another revelation of our Lord’s relation to His disciples is given in the fact that He changes Simon’s name. Jehovah, in the Old Testament, changes the names of Abraham and of Jacob. Babylonian kings in the Old Testament change the names of their vassal princes. Masters impose names on their slaves; and I suppose that even the marriage custom of the wife’s assuming the name of the husband rests originally upon the same idea of absolute authority. That idea is conveyed in the fact that our Lord changes Peter’s name, and so takes absolute possession of him, and asserts His mastery over him. We belong to Him altogether, because He has given Himself altogether for us. His absolute authority is the correlative of His utter self-surrender. He who can come to me and say, ‘I have spared not my life for thee,’ and He only, has the right to come to me and say, ‘yield yourself wholly to Me.’ So, Christian friends, your Master wants all your service; do you give yourselves up to Him out and out, not by half and half.

Lastly, that change of name implies Christ’s power and promise to bestow a new character and new

functions and honours. Peter was by no means a 'Peter' then. The name no doubt mainly implies official function, but that official function was prepared for by personal character; and in so far as the name refers to character, it means firmness. At that epoch Peter was rash, impulsive, headstrong, self-confident, vain, and therefore, necessarily changeable. Like the granite, all fluid and hot, and fluid because it was hot, he needed to cool in order to solidify into rock. And not until his self-confidence had been knocked out of him, and he had learned humility by falling; not until he had been beaten from all his presumption, and tamed down, and sobered and steadied by years of difficulty and responsibilities, did he become the rock that Christ meant him to be. All *that* lay concealed in the future, but in the change of his name, while he stood on the very threshold of his Christian career, there was preached to him, and there is preached to us, this great truth, that if you will go to Jesus Christ He will make a new man of you. No man's character is so obstinately rooted in evil but that Christ can change its set and direction. No man's natural dispositions are so faulty and low but that Christ can develop counterbalancing virtues, and out of the evil and weakness make strength. He will not make a Peter into a John, or a John into a Paul, but He will deliver Peter from the 'defects of his qualities,' and lead them up into a higher and a nobler region. There are no outcasts in the view of the transforming Christ. He dismisses no people out of His hospital as incurable, because anybody, everybody, the blackest, the most rooted in evil, those who have longest indulged in any given form of transgression, may all come to Him; with the certainty

that if they will cleave to Him, He will read all their character and all its weaknesses, and then with a glad smile of welcome and assured confidence on His face, will ensure to them a new nature and new dignities. 'Thou art Simon—thou shalt be Peter.'

The process will be long. It will be painful. There will be a great deal pared off. The sculptor makes the marble image by chipping away the superfluous marble. Ah! and when you have to chip away superfluous flesh and blood it is bitter work, and the chisel is often deeply dyed in gore, and the mallet seems to be very cruel. Simon did not know all that had to be done to make a Peter of him. We have to thank God's providence that we do not know all the sorrows and trials of the process of making us what He wills us to be. But we may be sure of this, that if only we keep near our Master, and let Him have His way with us, and work His will upon us, and if only we will not wince from the blows of the Great Artist's chisel, then out of the roughest block He will carve the fairest statue; and He will fulfil for us at last His great promise: 'I will give unto him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: III. PHILIP

'The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me.'—JOHN I. 43.

'THE day following'—we have a diary in this chapter and the next, extending from the day when John the

Baptist gives his official testimony to Jesus, up till our Lord's first journey to Jerusalem. The order of events is this. The deputation from the Sanhedrim to John occupied the first day. On the second Jesus comes back to John after His temptation, and receives his solemn attestation. On the third day, John repeats his testimony, and three disciples, probably four, make the nucleus of the Church. These are the two pairs of brothers, James and John, Andrew and Peter, who stand first in every catalogue of the Apostles, and were evidently nearest to Christ.

'The day following' of our text is the fourth day. On it our Lord determines to return to Galilee. His objects in His visit to John were accomplished—to receive his public attestation, and to gather the first little knot of His followers. Thus launched upon His course, He desired to return to His native district.

These events had occurred where John was baptising, in a place called in the English version Bethabara, which means 'The house of crossing,' or as we might say, Ferry-house. The traditional site for John's baptism is near Jericho, but the next chapter (verse i.) shows that it was only a day's journey from Cana of Galilee, and must therefore have been much further north than Jericho. A ford, still bearing the name Abarah, a few miles south of the lake of Gennesaret, has lately been discovered. Our Lord, then, and His disciples had a day's walking to take them back to Galilee. But apparently before they set out on that morning, Philip and Nathanael were added to the little band. So these two days saw six disciples gathered round Jesus.

Andrew and John sought Christ and found Him. To them He revealed Himself as very willing to be

approached, and glad to welcome any to His side. Peter, who comes next, was brought to Christ by his brother, and to him Christ revealed Himself as reading his heart, and promising and giving him higher functions and a more noble character.

Now we come to the third case, 'Jesus findeth Philip,' who was not seeking Jesus, and who was brought by no one. To him Christ reveals Himself as drawing near to many a heart that has not thought of Him, and laying a masterful hand of gracious authority on the springs of life and character in that autocratic word 'Follow Me.' So we have a gradually heightening revelation of the Master's graciousness to all souls, to them that seek and to them that seek Him not. It is only to the working out of these simple thoughts that I ask your attention now.

I. First, then, let us deal with the revelation that is given us here of the seeking Christ.

Every one who reads this chapter with even the slightest attention must observe how 'seeking' and 'finding' are repeated over and over again. Christ turns to Andrew and John with the question, 'What seek ye?' Andrew, as the narrative says, '*findeth* his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, "We have *found* the Messias!"' Then again, Jesus *finds* Philip; and again, Philip, as soon as he has been won to Jesus, goes off to *find* Nathanael; and his glad word to him is, once more, 'We have *found* the Messias.' It is a reciprocal play of finding and seeking all through these verses.

There are two kinds of finding. There is a casual stumbling upon a thing that you were not looking for, and there is a finding as the result of seeking. It is the latter which is here. Christ did not casually stumble

upon Philip, upon that morning, before they departed from the fords of the Jordan on their short journey to Cana of Galilee. He went to look for this other Galilean, one who was connected with Andrew and Peter, a native of the same little village. He went and found him; and whilst Philip was all unexpectant and undesirous, the Master came to him and laid His hand upon him, and drew him to Himself.

Now that is what Christ often does. There are men like the merchantman who went all over the world seeking goodly pearls, who with some eager longing to possess light, or truth, or goodness, or rest, search up and down and find it nowhere, because they are looking for it in a hundred different places. They are expecting to find a little here and a little there, and to piece all together to make of the fragments one all-sufficing restfulness. Then when they are most eager in their search, or when, perhaps, it has all died down into despair and apathy, the veil seems to be withdrawn, and they see Him whom they have been seeking all the time and knew not that He was there beside them. All, and more than all, that they sought for in the many pearls is stored for them in the one Pearl of great price. The ancient covenant stands firm to-day as for ever. 'Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

But then there are others, like Paul on the road to Damascus or like Matthew the publican, sitting at the receipt of custom, on whom there is laid a sudden hand, to whom there comes a sudden conviction, on whose eyes, not looking to the East, there dawns the light of Christ's presence. Such cases occur all through the ages, for He is not to be confined, bless His name! within the narrow limits of answering seeking souls,

or of showing Himself to people that are brought to Him by human instrumentality; but far beyond these bounds He goes, and many a time discloses His beauty and His sweetness to hearts that wist not of Him, and who can only say, 'Lo! God was in this place, and I knew it not.' 'Thou wast found of them that sought Thee not.'

As it was in His miracles upon earth, so it has been in the sweet and gracious works of His grace ever since. Sometimes He healed in response to the yearning desire that looked out of sick eyes, or that spoke from parched lips, and no man that ever came to Him and said 'Heal me!' was sent away beggared of His blessing. Sometimes He healed in response to the beseeching of those who, with loving hearts, carried their dear ones and laid them at His feet. But sometimes, to magnify the spontaneity and the completeness of His own love, and to show us that He is bound and limited by no human co-operation, and that He is His own motive, He reached out the blessing to a hand that was not extended to grasp it; and by His question, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' kindled desires that else had lain dormant for ever.

And so in this story before us; He will welcome and over-answer Andrew and John when they come seeking; He will turn round to them with a smile on His face, that converts the question, 'What seek ye?' into an invitation, 'Come and see.' And when Andrew brings his brother to Him, He will go more than half-way to meet him. But when these are won, there still remains another way by which He will have disciples brought into His Kingdom, and that is by Himself going out and laying His hand on the man and drawing him to His heart by the revelation of His love.

But further, and in a deeper sense, He really seeks us all, and, unasked, bestows His love upon us.

Whether we seek Him or no, there is no heart upon earth which Christ does not desire; and no man or woman within the sound of His gospel whom He is not in a very real sense seeking that He may draw them to Himself. His own word is a wonderful one: 'The Father *seeketh* such to worship Him'; as if God went all up and down the world looking for hearts to love Him and to turn to Him with reverent thankfulness. And as the Father, so the Son—who is for us the revelation of the Father: 'The Son of Man is come to *seek* and to save that which was lost.' No one on earth wanted Him, or dreamed of His coming. When He bowed the heavens and gathered Himself into the narrow space of the manger in Bethlehem, and took upon Him the limitations and the burdens and the weaknesses of manhood, it was not in response to any petition, it was in reply to no seeking; but He came spontaneously, unmoved, obeying but the impulse of His own heart, and because He would have mercy. He who is the Beginning, and will be First in all things, was first in this, that before they called He answered, and came upon earth unbesought and unexpected, because His own infinite love brought Him hither. Christ's mercy to a world does not come like water in a well that has to be pumped up, by our petitions, by our search, but like water in some fountain, rising sparkling into the sunlight by its own inward impulse. He is His own motive; and came to a forgetful and careless world, like a shepherd who goes after his flock in the wilderness, not because they bleat for him, while they crop the herbage which tempts them ever further from the fold and remember him and it no

more, but because he cannot have them lost. Men are not conscious of needing Christ till He comes. The supply creates the demand. He is like the 'dew which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.'

But not only does Christ seek us all, inasmuch as the whole conception and execution of His great work are independent of man's desires, but He seeks us each in a thousand ways. He longs to have each of us for His disciples. He seeks each of us for His disciples, by the motion of His Spirit on our spirits, by stirring conviction in our consciences, by pricking us often with a sense of our own evil, by all our restlessness and dissatisfaction, by the disappointments and the losses, as by the brightnesses and the goodness of earthly providences, and often through such agencies as my lips and the lips of other men. The Master Himself, who seeks all mankind, has sought and is seeking you at this moment. Oh! yield to His search. The shepherd goes out on the mountain side, for all the storm and the snow, and wades knee-deep through the drifts until he finds the sheep. And your Shepherd, who is also your Brother, has come looking for you, and at this moment is putting out His hand and laying hold of some of you through my poor words, and saying to you, as He said to Philip, 'Follow Me!'

II. And now let us next consider that word of authority which, spoken to the one man in our text, is really spoken to us all.

'Jesus findeth Philip, and saith unto him, "Follow Me!'" No doubt a great deal more passed, but no doubt what more passed was less significant and less important for the development of faith in this man than what is recorded. The word of authority, the invitation which was a demand, the demand which was an invita-

tion, and the personal impression which He produced upon Philip's heart, were the things that bound him to Jesus Christ for ever. 'Follow Me,' spoken at the beginning of the journey of Christ and His disciples back to Galilee, might have meant merely, on the surface, 'Come back with us.' But the words have, of course, a much deeper meaning. They mean—be My disciple. Think what is implied in them, and ask yourself whether the demand that Christ makes in these words is an unreasonable one, and then ask yourselves whether you have yielded to it or not.

We lose the force of the image by much repetition. Sheep follow a shepherd. Travellers follow a guide. Here is a man upon some dangerous cornice of the Alps, with a ledge of limestone as broad as the palm of your hand, and perhaps a couple of feet of snow above that, for him to walk upon, a precipice on either side; and his guide says, as he ropes himself to him, 'Now, tread where I tread!' Travellers follow their guides. Soldiers follow their commanders. There is the hell of the battlefield; here a line of wavering, timid, raw recruits. Their commander rushes to the front and throws himself upon the advancing enemy with the one word, 'Follow,' and the coward becomes a hero. Soldiers follow their captains. Your Shepherd comes to you and calls, 'Follow Me.' Your Captain and Commander comes to you and calls, 'Follow Me.' In all the dreary wilderness, in all the difficult contingencies and conjunctions, in all the conflicts of life, this Man strides in front of us and proposes Himself to us as Guide, Example, Consoler, Friend, Companion, everything; and gathers up all duty, all blessedness, in the majestic and simple words, 'Follow Me.'

It is a call at the least to accept Him as a Teacher, but the whole gist of the context here is to show us that from the beginning Christ's disciples did not look upon Him as a Rabbi's disciples did, as being simply a teacher, but recognised Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel. So that they were called upon by this command to accept His teaching in a very special way, not merely as Hillel or Gamaliel asked their disciples to accept theirs. Do you do that? Do you take Him as your illumination about all matters of theoretical truth, and of practical wisdom? Is His declaration of God your theology? Is His declaration of His own Person your creed? Do you think about His Cross as He did when He elected to be remembered in all the world by the broken body and the shed blood, which were the symbols of His reconciling death? Is His teaching, that the Son of Man comes to 'give His life a ransom for many,' the ground of your hope? Do you follow Him in your belief, and following Him in your belief, do you accept Him as, by His death and passion, the Saviour of your soul? 'That is the first step—to follow Him, to trust Him wholly for what He is, the Incarnate Son of God, the Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and therefore for your sins and mine. This is a call to faith.

It is also a call to obedience. 'Follow Me' certainly means 'Do as I bid you,' but softens all the harshness of that command. Sedulously plant your tremulous feet in His firm footsteps. Where you see His track going across the bog be not afraid to walk after Him, though it may seem to lead you into the deepest and the blackest of it. 'Follow Him' and you will be right. 'Follow Him' and you will be blessed. Do as Christ did, or as according to the best of your judgment it

seems to you that Christ would have done if He had been in your circumstances; and you will not go far wrong. 'The Imitation of Christ,' which Thomas à Kempis wrote his book about, is the sum of all practical Christianity. 'Follow Me!' makes discipleship to be something more than intellectual acceptance of His teaching, something more than even reliance for my salvation upon His work. It makes discipleship—springing out of these two—the acceptance of His teaching and the consequent reliance, by faith, upon His word—to be a practical reproduction of His character and conduct in mine.

It is a call to communion. If a man follows Christ he will walk close behind Him, and near enough to Him to hear Him speak, and to be 'guided by His eye.' He will be separated from other people, and from other paths. In these four things, then—Faith, Obedience, Imitation, Communion—lies the essence of discipleship. No man is a Christian who has not in some measure all four. Have you got them? .

What right has Jesus Christ to ask me to follow Him? Why should I? Who is He that He should set Himself up as being the perfect Example and the Guide for all the world? What has He done to bind me to Him, that I should take Him for my Master, and yield myself to Him in a subjection that I refuse to the mightiest names in literature, and thought, and practical benevolence? Who is this that assumes thus to dominate over us all? Ah! brethren, there is only one answer. 'This is none other than the Son of God who has given Himself a ransom for me, and therefore has the right, and only therefore has the right, to say to me, "Follow Me."'

III. And now one last word. Think for a moment about this silently and swiftly obedient disciple.

Philip says nothing. Of course the narrative is mere sketchy outline. He is silent, but he yields. Ah, brethren, how quickly a soul may be won or lost! That moment, when Philip's decision was trembling in the balance, was but a moment. It might have gone the other way, for Christ has no pressed men in His army; they are all volunteers. It might have gone the other way. A moment may settle for you whether you will be His disciple or not. People tell us that the belief in instantaneous conversions is unphilosophical. It seems to me that the objections to them are unphilosophical. All decisions are matters of an instant. Hesitation may be long, weighing and balancing may be a protracted process, but the decision is always a moment's work, a knife-edge. And there is no reason whatever why any one listening to me may not now, if he or she will, do as this man Philip did on the spot, and when Christ says 'Follow Me,' turn to Him and answer, 'I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.'

There is an old church tradition which says that the disciple who at a subsequent period answered Christ, 'Lord! suffer me first to go and bury my father,' was this same Apostle. I do not think that at all likely, but the tradition suggests to us one last thought about the reasons why people are kept back from yielding this obedience to Christ's invitation. Many of you are kept back, as that procrastinating follower was, because there are some other duties which you feel, or make to be, more important. 'I will think about Christianity and turning religious when this, that, or the other thing has been got over. I have my position in life to

make. I have a great many things to do that must be done at once, and really, I have not time to think about it.'

Then there are some of you that are kept from following Christ because you have never yet found out that you need a guide at all. Then there are some of you that are kept back because you like very much better to go your own way, and to follow your own inclination, and dislike the idea of following the will of another. There are a host of other reasons that I do not need to deal with now; but oh! brethren, none of them is worth pleading. They are excuses, they are not reasons. 'They all with one consent began to make excuse'—excuses, not reasons; and manufactured excuses, in order to cover a decision which has been taken before, and on other grounds altogether, which it is not convenient to bring up to the surface. I am not going to deal with these in detail, but I beseech you, do not let what I venture to call Christ's seeking of you once more, even by my poor words now, be in vain.

Follow Him. Trust, obey, imitate, hold fellowship with Him. You will always have a Companion, you will always have a Protector. 'He that followeth Me,' saith He, 'shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' And if you will listen to the Shepherd's voice and follow Him, that sweet old promise will be true, in its divinest and sweetest sense, about your life, in time; and about your life in the moment of death, the isthmus between two worlds, and about your life in eternity—'They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun nor heat smite them; for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.' 'Follow thou Me.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: IV. NATHANAEL

'Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48. Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.'—JOHN i. 45-49.

THE words are often the least part of a conversation. The Evangelist can tell us what Nathanael said to Jesus, and what Jesus said to Nathanael, but no Evangelist can reproduce the look, the tone, the magnetic influence which streamed out from Christ, and, we may believe, more than anything He said, riveted these men to Him.

It looks as if Nathanael and his companions were very easily convinced, as if their adhesion to such tremendous claims as those of Jesus Christ was much too facile a thing to be a very deep one. But what can be put down in black and white goes a very short way to solve the secret of the power which drew them to Himself.

The incident which is before us now runs substantially on the same lines as the previous bringing of Peter to Jesus Christ. In both cases the man is brought by a friend, in both cases the friend's weapon is simply the expression of his own personal experience, 'We have found the Messiah,' although Philip has a little more to say about Christ's correspondence with the prophetic word. In both cases the work is finished by our Lord Himself manifesting His own supernatural knowledge to the inquiring spirit, though in the case of Nathanael that process is a little more lengthened

out than in the case of Peter, because there was a little ice of hesitation and of doubt to be melted away. And Nathanael, starting from a lower point than Peter, having questions and hesitations which the other had not, rises to a higher point of faith and certitude, and from his lips first of all comes the full articulate confession, beyond which the Apostles never went as long as our Lord was upon earth: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.' So that both in regard to the revelation that is given of the character of our Lord, and in regard to the teaching that is given of the development and process of faith in a soul, this last narrative fitly crowns the whole series. In looking at it with you now, I think I shall best bring out its force by asking you to take it as falling into these three portions: first, the preparation—a soul brought to Christ by a brother; then the conversation—a soul fastened to Christ by Himself; and then the rapturous confession—'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.'

I. Look, then, first of all, at the preparation—a soul brought to Christ by a brother.

'Philip findeth Nathanael.' Nathanael, in all probability, as commentators will tell you, is the Apostle Bartholomew; and in the catalogues of the Apostles in the Gospels, Philip and he are always associated together. So that the two men, friends before, had their friendship riveted and made more close by this sacredest of all bonds, that the one had been to the other the means of bringing him to Jesus Christ. There is nothing that ties men to each other like that. If you want to know the full sweetness of association with friends, and of human love, get some heart knit to yours by this sacred and eternal bond that it owes to you its first

knowledge of the Saviour. So all human ties will be sweetened, ennobled, elevated, and made perpetual.

‘We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.’ Philip knows nothing about Christ’s supernatural birth, nor about its having been in Bethlehem; to him He is the son of a Nazarene peasant. But, notwithstanding that, He is the great, significant, mysterious Person for whom the whole sacred literature of Israel had been one long yearning for centuries; and he has come to believe that this Man standing beside him is the Person on whom all previous divine communications for a millennium past focussed and centred.

I need not dwell upon these words, because to do so would be to repeat substantially what I said in a former sermon on these first disciples, about the value of personal conviction as a means of producing conviction in the minds of others, and about the necessity and the possibility of all who have found Christ for themselves saying so to others, and thereby becoming His missionaries and evangelists.

I do not need to repeat what I said on that occasion; therefore I pass on to the very natural hesitation and question of Nathanael: ‘Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ A prejudice, no doubt, but a very harmless one; a very thin ice which melted as soon as Christ’s smile beamed upon him. And a most natural prejudice. Nathanael came from Cana of Galilee, a little hill village, three or four miles from Nazareth. We all know the bitter feuds and jealousies of neighbouring villages, and how nothing is so pleasant to the inhabitants of one as a gibe about the inhabitants of another. And in Nathanael’s words there

simply speaks the rustic jealousy of Cana against Nazareth.

It is easy to blame him, but do you think that you or I, if we had been in his place, would have been likely to have said anything very different? Suppose you were told that a peasant out of Ross-shire was a man on whom the whole history of this nation hung. Do you think you would be likely to believe it without first saying, 'That is a strange place for such a person to be born in'? Galilee was the despised part of Palestine, and Nazareth obviously was a proverbially despised village of Galilee; and this Jesus was a carpenter's son that nobody had ever heard of. It seemed to be a strange head on which the divine dove should flutter down, passing by all the Pharisees and the Scribes, all the great people and wise people. Nathanael's prejudice was but the giving voice to a fault that is as wide as humanity, and which we have every day of our lives to fight with; not only in regard to religious matters but in regard to all others—namely, the habit of estimating people, and their work, and their wisdom, and their power to teach us, by the class to which they are supposed to belong, or even by the place from which they come.

'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' 'Can a German teach an Englishman anything that he does not know?' 'Is a Protestant to owe anything of spiritual illumination to a Roman Catholic?' 'Are we Dissenters to receive any wisdom or example from Churchmen?' 'Will a Conservative be able to give any lessons in politics to a Liberal?' 'Is there any other bit of England that can teach Lancashire?' Take care that whilst you are holding up your hands in horror against the prejudices of our Lord's contem-

poraries, who stumbled at His origin, you are not doing the same thing in regard to all manner of subjects twenty times a day.

That is one very plain lesson, and not at all too secular for a sermon. Take another. This three-parts innocent prejudice of Nathanael brings into clear relief for us what a very real obstacle to the recognition of our Lord's Messianic authority His apparently lowly origin was. We have got over it, and it is no difficulty to us; but it was so then. When Jesus Christ came into this world Judæa was ruled by the most heartless of aristocracies, an aristocracy of cultured pedants. Wherever you get such a class you get people who think that there can be nobody worth looking at, or worth attending to, outside the little limits of their own supercilious superiority. Why did Jesus Christ come from 'the men of the earth,' as the Rabbis called all who had not learned to cover every plain precept with spiders' webs of casuistry? Why, for one thing, in accordance with the general law that the great reformers and innovators always come from outside these classes, that the Spirit of the Lord shall come on a herdsman like Amos, and fishermen and peasants spread the Gospel through the world; and that in politics, in literature, in science, as well as in religion, it is always true that 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' To the cultivated classes you have to look for a great deal that is precious and good, but for fresh impulse, in unbroken fields, you have to look outside them. And so the highest of all lives is conformed to the general law

More than that, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph,' came thus because He was the poor man's

Christ, because He was the ignorant man's Christ, because His word was not for any class, but as broad as the world. He came poor, obscure, unlettered, that all who, like Him, were poor and untouched by the finger of earthly culture, might in Him find their Brother, their Helper, and their Friend.

'Philip saith unto him, Come and see.' He is not going to argue the question. He gives the only possible answer to it—'You ask Me, can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' 'Come and see whether it is a good thing or no; and if it is, and if it came out of Nazareth, well then, the question has answered itself.' The quality of a thing cannot be settled by the origin of the thing.

As it so happened, this Man did not come out of Nazareth at all, though neither Philip nor Nathanael knew it; but if He had, it would have been all the same. The right answer was 'Come and see.'

Now although, of course, there is no kind of correspondence between the mere prejudice of this man Nathanael and the rooted intellectual doubts of other generations, yet 'Come and see' carries in it the essence of all Christian apologetics. By far the wisest thing that any man who has to plead the cause of Christianity can do is to put Christ well forward, and let people look at Him, and trust Him to produce His own impression. We may argue round, and round, and round about Him for evermore, and we shall never convince as surely as by simply holding Him forth. 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Yet we are so busy proving Christianity that we sometimes have no time to preach it; so busy demonstrating that Jesus Christ is this, that, and the other thing, or contradicting the notion that He is not this, that, and the

other thing, that we forget simply to present Him for men to look at. Depend upon it, whilst argument has its function, and there are men that must be approached thereby; on the whole, and for the general, the best way of propagating Christianity is to proclaim it, and the second best way is to prove it. Our arguments do fare very often very much as did that elaborate discourse that a bishop once preached to prove the existence of a God, at the end of which a simple old woman who had not followed his reasoning very intelligently, exclaimed, 'Well, for all he says, I can't help thinking there is a God after all.' The errors that are quoted to be confuted often remain more clear in the hearers' minds than the attempted confutations. Hold forth Christ—cry aloud to men, 'Come and see!' and some eyes will turn and some hearts cleave to Him.

And on the other side, dear brethren, you have not done fairly by Christianity until you have complied with this invitation, and submitted your mind and heart honestly to the influence and the impression that Christ Himself would make upon it.

II. We come now to the second stage—the conversation between Christ and Nathanael, where we see a soul fastened to Christ by Himself.

In general terms, as I remarked, the method by which our Lord manifests His Messiahship to this single soul is a revelation of His supernatural knowledge of him. But a word or two may be said about the details. Mark the emphasis with which the Evangelist shows us that our Lord speaks this discriminating characterisation of Nathanael before Nathanael had come to Him: 'He saw him coming.' So it was not with a swift, penetrating glance of intuition that He read his

character in his face. It was not that He generalised rapidly from one action which He had seen him do. It was not from any previous personal knowledge of him, for, obviously, from the words of Philip to Nathanael, the latter had never seen Jesus Christ. As Nathanael was drawing near Him, before he had done anything to show himself, our Lord speaks the words which show that He had read his very heart: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.'

That is to say, here is a man who truly represents that which was the ideal of the whole nation. The reference is, no doubt, to the old story of the occasion on which Jacob's name was changed to Israel. And we shall see a further reference to the same story in the subsequent verses. Jacob had wrestled with God in that mysterious scene by the brook Jabbok, and had overcome, and had received instead of the name Jacob, 'a supplanter,' the name of Israel, 'for as a Prince hast thou power with God and hast prevailed.' And, says Christ: 'This man also is a son of Israel, one of God's warriors, who has prevailed with Him by prayer.' 'In whom is no guile'—Jacob in his early life had been marked and marred by selfish craft. Subtlety and guile had been the very keynote of his character. To drive that out of him, years of discipline and pain and sorrow had been needed. And not until it had been driven out of him could his name be altered, and he become Israel. This man has had the guile driven out of him. By what process? The words are a verbal quotation from Psalm xxxii.: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' Clear, candid openness of spirit, and the freedom of soul from all

that corruption which the Psalmist calls 'guile,' is the property of him only who has received it, by confession, by pardon, and by cleansing, from God. Thus Nathanael, in his wrestling, had won the great gift. His transgression had been forgiven; his iniquity had been covered; to him God had not imputed his sin; and in his spirit, therefore, there was no guile. Ah, brother! if that black drop is to be cleansed out of your heart, it must be by the same means—confession to God and pardon from God. And then you too will be a prince with Him, and your spirit will be frank and free, and open and candid.

Nathanael, with astonishment, says, 'Lord, whence knowest Thou me?' Not that he appropriates the description to himself, or recognises the truthfulness of it, but he is surprised that Christ should have means of forming any judgment with reference to him, and so he asks Him, half expecting an answer which will show the natural origin of our Lord's knowledge: 'Whence knowest Thou me?' Then comes the answer, which, to supernatural insight into Nathanael's character, adds supernatural knowledge of Nathanael's secret actions: 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. And it is because I saw thee under the fig-tree that I knew thee to be "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."' So then, under the fig-tree, Nathanael must have been wrestling in prayer; under the fig-tree must have been confessing his sins; under the fig-tree must have been longing and looking for the Deliverer who was to 'turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' So solitary had been that vigil, and so little would any human eye that had looked upon it have known what had been passing in his mind, that Christ's knowledge of it and of its

significance at once lights up in Nathanael's heart the fire of the glad conviction, 'Thou art the Son of God.' If we had seen Nathanael, we should only have seen a man sitting, sunk in thought, under a fig-tree; but Jesus had seen the spiritual struggle which had no outward marks, and to have known which He must have exercised the divine prerogative of reading the heart.

I ask you to consider whether Nathanael's conclusion was not right, and whether that woman of Samaria was not right when she hurried back to the city, leaving her water-pot, and said, 'Come and see a man that told me *all* that ever I did.' That 'all' was a little stretch of facts, but still it was true in spirit. And her inference was absolutely true: 'Is not this the Christ, the Son of God?' This is the first miracle that Jesus Christ wrought. His supernatural knowledge, which cannot be struck out from the New Testament representations of His character, is as much a mark of divinity as any of the other of His earthly manifestations. It is not the highest; it does not appeal to our sympathies as some of the others do, but it is irrefragable. Here is a man to whom all men with whom He came in contact were like those clocks with a crystal face which shows us *all* the works. How does He come to have this perfect and absolute knowledge?

That omniscience, as manifested here, shows us how glad Christ is when He sees anything good, anything that He can praise in any of us. 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.' Not a word about Nathanael's prejudice, not a word about any of his faults (though no doubt he had plenty of them), but the cordial praise that he was an honest, a sincere man, following after God and after truth. There is nothing

which so gladdens Christ as to see in us any faint traces of longing for, and love towards, and likeness to, His own self. His omniscience is never so pleased as when beneath heaps and mountains of vanity and sin it discerns in a man's heart some poor germ of goodness and longing for His grace.

And then again, notice how we have here our Lord's omniscience set forth as cognisant of all our inward crises and struggles. 'When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.' I suppose all of us could look back to some place or other, under some hawthorn hedge, or some boulder by the seashore, or some mountain-top, or perhaps in some back-parlour, or in some crowded street, where some never-to-be-forgotten epoch in our soul's history passed, unseen by all eyes, and which would have shown no trace to any onlooker, except perhaps a tightly compressed lip. Let us rejoice to feel that Christ sees all these moments which no other eye can see. In our hours of crisis, and in our monotonous, uneventful moments, in the rush of the furious waters, when the stream of our lives is caught among rocks, and in the long, languid reaches of its smoothest flow, when we are fighting with our fears or yearning for His light, or even when sitting dumb and stolid, like snow men, apathetic and frozen in our indifference, He sees us, and pities, and will help the need which He beholds.

'Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Saviour is not by;
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Saviour is not near.'

'When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.'

III. One word more about this rapturous confession,

which crowns the whole: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.'

Where had Nathanael learned these great names? He was a disciple of John the Baptist, and he had no doubt heard John's testimony as recorded in this same chapter, when he told us how the voice from Heaven had bid him recognise the Messiah by the token of the descending Dove, and how he 'saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.' John's testimony was echoed in Nathanael's confession. Undoubtedly he attached but vague ideas to the name, far less articulate and doctrinal than we have the privilege of doing. To him 'Son of God' could not have meant all that it ought to mean to us, but it meant something that he saw clearly, and a great deal beyond that he saw but dimly. It meant that God had sent, and was in some special sense the Father of, this Jesus of Nazareth.

'Thou art the King of Israel.' John had been preaching, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' The Messiah was to be the theocratic King, the King, not of 'Judah' nor of 'the Jews,' but of 'Israel,' the nation that had entered into covenant with God. So the substance of the confession was the Messiahship of Jesus, as resting upon His special divine relationship and leading to His Kingly sway.

Notice also the enthusiasm of the confession; one's ear hears clearly a tone of rapture in it. The joy-bells of the man's heart are all a-ringing. It is no mere intellectual acknowledgment of Christ as Messiah. The difference between mere head-belief and heart-faith lies precisely in the presence of these elements of confidence, of enthusiastic loyalty, and absolute submission.

So the great question for each of us is, not, Do I

believe as a piece of my intellectual creed that Christ is 'the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel'? I suppose almost all my hearers here now do that. That will not make you a Christian, my friend. That will neither save your soul nor quiet your heart, nor bring you peace and strength in life, nor open the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven to you. A man may be miserable, wholly sunk in all manner of wickedness and evil, die the death of a dog, and go to punishment hereafter, though he believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the King of Israel. You want something more than that. You want just this element of rapturous acknowledgment, of loyal submission, absolute obedience, of unfaltering trust.

Look at these first disciples, six brave men that had all that loyalty and love to Him; though there was not a soul in the world but themselves to share their convictions. Do they not shame you? When He comes to you, as He does come, with this question, 'Whom do ye say that I am?' may God give you grace to answer, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and not only to answer it with your lips, but to trust Him wholly with your hearts, and with enthusiastic devotion to bow your whole being in adoring wonder and glad submission at His feet. If we are 'Israelites indeed,' our hearts will crown Him as the 'King of Israel.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: V. BELIEVING AND SEEING

‘Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’—JOHN I. 50, 51.

HERE we have the end of the narrative of the gathering together of the first disciples, which has occupied several sermons. We have had occasion to point out how each incident in the series has thrown some fresh light upon two main subjects, namely, upon some phase or other of the character and work of Jesus Christ, or upon the various ways by which faith, which is the condition of discipleship, is kindled in men’s souls. These closing words may be taken as the crowning thoughts on both these matters.

Our Lord recognises and accepts the faith of Nathanael and his fellows, but, like a wise Teacher, lets His pupils at the very beginning get a glimpse of how much lies ahead for them to learn; and in the act of accepting the faith gives just one hint of the great tract of yet uncomprehended knowledge of Him which lies before them; ‘Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.’ He accepts Nathanael’s confession and the confession of his fellows. Human lips have given Him many great and wonderful titles in this chapter. John called Him ‘the Lamb of God’; the first disciples hailed Him as the ‘Messias, which is the Christ’; Nathanael fell before Him with the rapturous exclamation, ‘Thou art the Son of God:

Thou art the King of Israel!' All these crowns had been put on His head by human hands, but here He crowns Himself. He makes a mightier claim than any that they had dreamed of, and proclaims Himself to be the medium of all communication and intercourse between heaven and earth: 'Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

So, then, there are two great principles that lie in these verses, and are contained in, first, our Lord's mighty promise to His new disciples, and second, in our Lord's witness to Himself. Let me say a word or two about each of these.

I. Our Lord's promise to His new disciples.

Christ's words here may be translated either as a question or as an affirmation. It makes comparatively little difference to the substantial meaning whether we read 'believest thou?' or 'thou believest.' In the former case there will be a little more vivid expression of surprise and admiration at the swiftness of Nathanael's faith, but in neither case are we to find anything of the nature of blame or of doubt as to the reality of his belief. The question, if it be a question, is no question as to whether Nathanael's faith was a genuine thing or not. There is no hint that he has been too quick with his confession, and has climbed too rapidly to the point that he has attained. But in either case, whether the word be a question or an affirmation, we are to see in it the solemn and glad recognition of the reality of Nathanael's confession and belief.

Here is the first time that that word 'belief' came from Christ's lips; and when we remember all the importance that has been attached to it in the sub-

sequent history of the Church, and the revolution in human thought which followed upon our Lord's demand of our faith, there is an interest in noticing the first appearance of the word. It was an epoch in the history of the world when Christ first claimed and accepted a man's faith.

Of course the second part of this verse, 'Thou shalt see greater things than these,' has its proper fulfilment in the gradual manifestation of His person and character, which followed through the events recorded in the Gospels. His life of service, His words of wisdom, His deeds of power and of pity, His death of shame and of glory, His Resurrection and His Ascension, these are the 'greater things' which Nathanael is promised. They all lay unrevealed yet, and what our Lord means is simply this: 'If you will continue to trust in Me, as you have trusted Me, and stand beside Me, you will see unrolled before your eyes and comprehended by your faith the great facts which will make the manifestation of God to the world.' But though that be the original application of the words, yet I think we may fairly draw from them some lessons that are of importance to ourselves; and I ask you to look at the hint that they give us about three things,—faith and discipleship, faith and sight, faith and progress. 'Believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.'

First, here is light thrown upon the relation between faith and discipleship. It is clear that our Lord here uses the word for the first time in the full Christian sense, that He regards the exercise of faith as being practically synonymous with being a disciple, that from the very first, believers were disciples, and disciples were believers.

Then, notice still further that our Lord here employs the word 'belief' without any definition of what or whom it is that they were to believe. He Himself, and not certain thoughts about Him, is the true object of a man's faith. We may believe a proposition, but faith must grasp a person. Even when the person is made known to us by a proposition which we have to believe before we can trust the person, still the essence of faith is not the intellectual process of laying hold upon a certain thought, and acquiescing in it, but the moral process of casting myself in full confidence upon the Being that is revealed to me by the thought,—of laying my hand, and leaning my weight, on the Man about whom it tells me. And so faith, which is discipleship, has in it for its very essence the personal element of trust in Jesus Christ.

Then, further, notice how widely different from our creed was Nathanael's creed, and yet how identical with our faith, if we are Christians, was Nathanael's faith. He knew nothing about the very heart of Christ's work, His atoning death. He knew nothing about the highest glory of Christ's person, His divine Sonship, in its unique and lofty sense. These lay unrevealed, and were amongst the greater things which he was yet to see; but though thus his knowledge was imperfect, and his creed incomplete as compared with ours, his faith was the very same. He laid hold upon Christ, he clave to Him with all his heart, he was ready to accept His teaching, he was willing to do His will, and as for the rest—'Thou shalt see greater things than these.' So, dear brethren, from these words of my text here, from the unhesitating attribution of the lofty notion of faith to this man, from the way in which our Lord uses the word, are gathered

these three points that I beseech you to ponder: there is no discipleship without faith; faith is the personal grasp of Christ Himself; the contents of creeds may differ whilst the element of faith remains the same. I beseech you let Christ come to you with the question of my text, and as He looks you in the eyes, hear Him say to you, '*Believest thou?*'

Secondly, notice how in this great promise to the new disciples there is light thrown upon another subject, viz. the connection between faith and sight. There is a great deal about seeing in this context. Christ said to the first two that followed Him, 'Come and see.' Philip met Nathanael's thin film of prejudice with the same words, 'Come and see.' Christ greeted the approaching Nathanael with 'When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee.' And now His promise is cast into the same metaphor: 'Thou shalt see greater things than these.'

There is a double antithesis here. 'I saw thee, 'Thou shalt see Me.' 'Thou wast convinced because thou didst feel that thou wert the passive object of My vision. Thou shalt be still more convinced when illuminated by Me. Thou shalt see even as thou art seen. I saw thee, and that bound thee to Me; thou shalt see Me, and that will confirm the bond.'

There is another antithesis, namely—between believing and seeing. 'Thou believest—that is thy present; thou shalt see, that is thy hope for the future.' Now I have already explained that, in the proper primary meaning and application of the words, the sight which is here promised is simply the observance with the outward eye of the historical facts of our Lord's life which were yet to be learned. But still we may gather a truth from this antithesis which will be of use to

us. 'Thou believest—thou shalt see'; that is to say, in the loftiest region of spiritual experience you must believe first, in order that you may see.

I do not mean, as is sometimes meant, by that statement that a man has to try to force his understanding into the attitude of accepting religious truth, in order that he may have an experience which will convince him that it is true. I mean a very much simpler thing than that, and a very much truer one, viz. this, that unless we trust to Christ and take our illumination from Him, we shall never behold a whole set of truths which, when once we trust Him, are all plain and clear to us. It is no mysticism to say that. What do you *know* about God?—I put emphasis upon the word 'know'—What do you know about Him, however much you may argue and speculate and think probable, and fear, and hope, and question, about Him? What do you know about Him apart from Jesus Christ? What do you know about human duty, apart from Him? What do you know of all that dim region that lies beyond the grave, apart from Him? If you trust Him, if you fall at His feet and say 'Rabbi! Thou art my Teacher and mine illumination,' then you will see. You will see God, man, yourselves, duty; you will see light upon a thousand complications and perplexities; and you will have a brightness above that of the noonday sun, streaming into the thickest darkness of death and the grave and the awful hereafter. Christ is the Light. In that 'Light shall we see light.' And just as it needs the sun to rise in order that my eye may behold the outer world, so it needs that I shall have Christ shining in my heaven to illuminate the whole universe, in order that I may see clearly. 'Believe and thou shalt see.' For only

when we trust Him do the mightiest truths that affect humanity stand plain and clear before us.

And besides that, if we trust Christ, we get a living experience of a multitude of facts and principles which are all mist and darkness to men except through their faith; an experience which is so vivid and brings such certitude as that it may well be called vision. The world says, 'Seeing is believing.' So it is about the coarse things that you can handle, but about everything that is higher than these invert the proverb, and you get the truth. 'Seeing is believing.' Yes, in regard to outward things. Believing is seeing in regard to God and spiritual truth. 'Believest thou? thou shalt see.'

Then, thirdly, there is light here about another matter, the connection between faith and progress. 'Thou shalt see greater things than these.' A wise teacher stimulates his scholars from the beginning, by giving them glimpses of how much there is ahead to be learnt. That does not drive them to despair; it braces all their powers. And so Christ, as His first lesson to these men, substantially says, 'You have learnt nothing yet, you are only beginning.' That is true about us all. Faith at first, both in regard to its contents and its quality, is very rudimentary and infantile. A man when he is first converted—perhaps suddenly—knows after a fashion that he himself is a very sinful, wretched, poor creature, and he knows that Jesus Christ has died for him, and is his Saviour, and his heart goes out to Him, in confidence and love and obedience. But he is only standing at the door and peeping in as yet. He has only mastered the alphabet. He is but on the frontier of the promised land. His faith has brought him into contact with

Infinite power, and what will be the end of that? He will indefinitely grow. His faith has started him on a course to which there is no natural end. As long as it keeps alive he will be growing and growing, and getting nearer and nearer to the great centre of all.

So here is a grand possibility opened out in these simple words, a possibility which alone meets what you need, and what you are craving for, whether you know it or not, namely, something that will give you ever new powers and acquirements; something which will ensure your closer and ever closer approach to an absolute object of joy and truth; something that will ensure you against stagnation and guarantee unceasing progress. Everything else gets worn out, sooner or later; if not in this world, then in another. There is one course on which a man can enter with the certainty that there is no end to it, that it will open out, and out, and out as he advances—with the certainty that, come life, come death, it is all the same.

When the plant grows too tall for the greenhouse they lift the roof, and it grows higher still. Whether you have your growth in this lower world, or whether you have your top up in the brightness and the blue of heaven, the growth is in one direction. There is a way that secures endless progress, and here lies the secret of it: 'Thou believest! thou shalt see greater things than these.'

Now, brethren, that is a grand possibility, and it is a solemn lesson for some of you. You professing Christian people, are you any taller than you were when you were born? Have you grown at all? Are you growing now? Have you seen any further into

the depths of Jesus Christ than you did on that first day when you fell at His feet and said, 'Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel'? His promise to you then was, 'Thou believest, thou shalt see greater things.' If you have not seen greater things it is because your faith has broken down, if it has not expired.

II. Now let me turn to the second thought which lies in these great words.

We have here, as I said, our Lord crowning Himself by His own witness to His own dignity. 'Hereafter ye shall see the heavens opened.' Mark how, with superbly autocratic lips, He bases this great utterance upon nothing else but His own word. Prophets ever said, 'Thus saith the Lord.' Christ ever said: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you.' 'Because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself.' He puts His own assurance instead of all argument and of all support to His words.

'Hereafter.' A word which is possibly not genuine, and is omitted, as you will observe, in the Revised Version. If it is to be retained it must be translated, not 'hereafter,' as if it were pointing to some indefinite period in the future, but 'from henceforth,' as if asserting that the opening heavens and the descending angels began to be manifested from that first hour of His official work. 'Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending.' That is an allusion from the story of Jacob at Bethel. We have found reference to Jacob's history already in the conversation with Nathanael, 'An Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' And here is an unmistakable reference to that story, when the fugitive, with his head on the stony pillow, and the violet Syrian

sky, with all its stars, rounding itself above him, beheld the ladder on which the angels of God ascended and descended. 'So,' says Christ, 'you shall see, in no vision of the night, in no transitory appearance, but in a practical waking reality, that ladder come down again, and the angels of God moving upon it in their errands of mercy.'

And who, or what, is this ladder? Christ. Do not read these words as meaning that the angels of God were to come down on Him to help, and to honour, and to succour Him as they did once or twice in His life, but as meaning that they are to ascend and descend by Him for the help and blessing of the whole world.

That is to say, to put it into plain words, Christ is the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth, the ladder with its foot upon the earth in His humanity, and its top in the heavens. 'No man hath ascended up into heaven save He which came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.'

My time will not allow me to expand these thoughts as I would have done; let me put them in the briefest outline. Christ is the medium of all communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as He is the medium of all revelation. I have spoken incidentally about that in the former part of this sermon, so I do not dwell on it now. Christ is the ladder between heaven and earth, inasmuch as in Him the sense of separation, and the reality of separation, are swept away. Sin has shut heaven; there comes down from it many a blessing upon unthankful heads, but between it in its purity and the earth in its muddy foulness 'there is a great gulf fixed.' It is not because God is great and I am small, or

because He is Infinite and I am a mere pin-point as against a great continent, it is not because He lives for ever, and my life is but a hand-breadth, it is not because of the difference between His Omniscience and my ignorance, His strength and my weakness, that I am parted from Him. 'Your sins have separated between you and your God,' and no man, build he Babels ever so high, can reach thither. There is one means by which the separation is at an end, and by which all objective hindrances to union, and all subjective hindrances, are alike swept away. Christ has come, and in Him the heavens have bended down to touch, and touching to bless, this low earth, and man and God are at one once more.

He is the ladder, or sole medium of communication, inasmuch as by Him all divine blessings, grace, helps, and favours, come down angel-like, into our weak and needy hearts. Every strength, every mercy, every spiritual power, consolation in every sorrow, fitness for duty, illumination in darkness, all gifts that any of us can need, come to us down on that one shining way, the mediation and the work of the Divine-Human Christ, the Lord.

He is the ladder, the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as by Him my poor desires and prayers and intercessions, my wishes, my sighs, my confessions rise to God. 'No man cometh to the Father but by Me.' He is the ladder, the means of all communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as at the last, if ever we enter there at all, we shall enter through Him and through Him alone, who is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'

Ah, dear brethren! men are telling us now that there is no connection between earth and heaven

except such as telescopes and spectroscopes can make out. We are told that there is no ladder, that there are no angels, that possibly there is no God, or if that there be, we have nothing to do with Him nor He with us; that our prayers cannot get to His ears, if He have ears, nor His hand be stretched out to help us, if He have a hand. I do not know how this cultivated generation is to be brought back again to faith in God and delivered from that ghastly doubt which empties heaven and saddens earth to its victims, but by giving heed to the word which Christ spoke to the whole race while He addressed Nathanael, 'Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' If He be the Son of God, then all these heavenly messengers reach the earth by Him. If He be the Son of Man, then every man may share in the gifts which through Him are brought into the world, and His Manhood, which evermore dwelt in heaven, even while on earth, and was ever girt about by angel presences, is at once the measure of what each of us may become, and the power by which we may become it.

One thing is needful for this wonderful consummation, even our faith. And oh! how blessed it will be if in waste solitudes we can see the open heaven, and in the blackest night the blaze of the glory of a present Christ, and hear the soft rustle of angels' wings filling the air, and find in every place 'a house of God and a gate of heaven,' because He is there. All that may be yours on one condition: 'Believest thou? Thou shalt see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

JESUS THE JOY-BRINGER

'And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2. And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. 3. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. 4. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. 5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. 6. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, 10. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.'—JOHN II. 1-11.

THE exact dating of this first miracle indicates an eye-witness. As Nazareth was some thirty miles distant from the place where John was baptizing, and Cana about four miles from Nazareth, the 'third day' is probably reckoned from the day of the calling of Philip. Jesus and His disciples seem to have been invited to the marriage feast later than the other guests, as Mary was already there. She appears to have been closely connected with the family celebrating the feast, as appears from her knowledge of the deficiency in the wine, and her direction to the servants.

The first point, which John makes all but as emphatic as the miracle itself, is the new relation between Mary and Jesus, the lesson she had to learn, and her sweet triumphant trust. Now that she sees her Son surrounded by His disciples, the secret hope which she had nourished silently for so long bursts into flame, and she turns to Him with beautiful faith in His power to help, even in the small present need. What an example her first word to Him sets us all! Like the

two sad sisters at Bethany, she is sure that to tell Him of trouble is enough, for that His own heart will impel Him to share, and perchance to relieve it. Let us tell Jesus our wants and leave Him to deal with them as He knows how.

Of course, His addressing her as 'Woman' has not the meaning which it would have with us, for the term is one of respect and courtesy, but there is a plain intimation of a new distance in it, which is strengthened by the question, 'What is there in common between us?' What in common between a mother and her son! Yes, but she has to learn that the assumption of the position of Messiah in which her mother's pride so rejoiced, carried necessarily a consequence, the first of the swords which were to pierce that mother's heart of hers. That her Son should no more call her 'mother,' but 'woman,' told her that the old days of being subject to her were past for ever, and that the old relation was merged in the new one of Messiah and disciple—a bitter thought, which many a parent has to taste the bitterness of still, when wider outlooks and new sense of a vocation come to their children. Few mothers are able to accept the inevitable as Mary did. Jesus' 'hour' is not to be prescribed to Him, but His own consciousness of the fit time must determine His action. What gave Him the signal that the hour was struck is not told us, nor how soon after that moment it came. But the saying gently but decisively declares His freedom, His infallible accuracy, and certain intervention at the right time. We may think that He delays, but He always helps, 'and that right early.'

Mary's sweet humility and strong trust come out wonderfully in her direction to the servants, which is

the exact opposite of what might have been expected after the cold douche administered to her eagerness to prompt Jesus. Her faith had laid hold of the little spark of promise in that 'not yet,' and had fanned it into a flame. 'Then He will intervene, and I can leave Him to settle when.' How firm, though ignorant, must have been the faith which did not falter even at the bitter lesson and the apparent repulse, and how it puts to shame our feebler confidence in our better known Lord, if ever He delays our requests! Mary left all to Jesus; His commands were to be implicitly obeyed. Do we submit to Him in that absolute fashion both as to the time and the manner of His responses to our petitions?

The next point is the actual miracle. It is told with remarkable vividness and equally remarkable reserve. We do not even learn in what precisely it consisted. Was all the water in the vessels turned into wine? Did the change affect only what was drawn out? No answer is possible to these questions. Jesus spoke no word of power, nor put forth His hand. His will silently effected the change on matter. So He manifested forth His glory as Creator and Sustainer, as wielding the divine prerogative of affecting material things by His bare volition.

The reality of the miracle is certified by the jovial remark of the 'ruler of the feast.' As Bengel says: 'The ignorance of the ruler proves the goodness of the wine; the knowledge of the servants, the reality of the miracle.' His palate, at any rate, was not so dulled as to be unable to tell a good 'brand' when he tasted it, nor is there any reason to suppose that Jesus was supplying more wine to a company that had already had more than enough.

The ruler's words are not meant to apply to the guests at that feast, but are quite general. But this Evangelist is fond of quoting words which have deeper meanings than the speakers dreamed, and with his mystically contemplative eye he sees hints and symbols of the spiritual in very common things. So we are not forcing higher meanings into the ruler's jest, but catching one intention of John's quotation of it, when we see in it an unconscious utterance of the great truth that Jesus keeps His best wine till the last. How many poor deluded souls are ever finding that the world does the very opposite, luring men on to be its slaves and victims by brilliant promises and short-lived delights, which sooner or later lose their deceitful lustre and become stale, and often positively bitter! 'The end of that mirth is heaviness.' The dreariest thing in all the world is a godless old age, and one of the most beautiful things in all the world is the calm sunset which so often glorifies a godly life that has been full of effort for Jesus, and of sorrows patiently borne as being sent by Him.

'Full often clad in radiant vest
Deceitfully goes forth the morn,'

but Christ more than keeps His morning's promises, and Christian experience is steadily progressive, if Christians cling close to Him, and Heaven will supply the transcendent confirmation of the blessed truth that was spoken unawares by the 'ruler' at that humble feast.

What effect the miracle produced on others is not told; probably the guests shared the ruler's ignorance, but its effect on the disciples is that they 'believed on Him.' They had 'believed' already, or they would not

have been disciples (John i. 50), but their faith was deepened as well as called forth afresh. Our faith ought to be continuously and increasingly responsive to His continuous manifestations of Himself which we can all find in our own experience.

Jesus 'manifested His glory' in this first sign. What were the rays of that mild radiance? Surely the chief of them, in addition to the revelation of His sovereignty over matter, to which we have already referred, is that therein He hallowed the sweet sacred joys of marriage and family life, that therein He revealed Himself as looking with sympathetic eye on the ties that bind us together, and on the gladness of our common humanity, that therein He reveals Himself as able and glad to sanctify and elevate our joys and infuse into them a strange new fragrance and power. The 'water' of our ordinary lives is changed into 'wine.' Jesus became 'acquainted with grief' in order that He might impart to every believing and willing soul His own joy, and that by its remaining in us, our joy might be full.

THE FIRST MIRACLE IN CANA—THE WATER MADE WINE

'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory.'—JOHN ii. 11.

THE keynote of this Gospel was struck in the earlier verses of the first chapter in the great words, 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, full of grace and truth.' To these words there is an evident reference in this language. The Evangelist regards Christ's first miracle as the

first ray of that forth-flashing glory of the Incarnate Word. To this Evangelist all miracles are especially important as being *signs*, which is the word he generally employs to designate them. They are not mere portents, but significant revelations as well as wonders. It is not, I think, accidental that there are just seven miracles of our Lord's, before His crucifixion, recorded by John, and one of the Risen Lord.

These signs are all set forth by the Evangelist as manifestations of various aspects of that one white light of uncreated glory which rays from Christ. They are, if I may so say, the sevenfold colours into which the one beam is analysed. Each of them might be looked at in turn as presenting some fresh thought of what the 'glory . . . full of grace and truth' is.

I begin with the first of the series. What, then, is the 'glory of the only Begotten Son' which flashes forth upon us from the miracle? My object is simply to try to answer that question for you.

I. First, then, we see here the revelation of His creative power.

It is very noteworthy that the miraculous fact is veiled entirely in the narrative. Not a word is said of the method of operation, it is not even said that the miracle was wrought; we are only told what preceded it, and what followed it. Itself is shrouded in deep silence. The servants fill the water-pots.—'Draw out now,' and they draw, 'and bear it to the governor of the feast.' Where the miraculous act comes in we do not know; what was its nature we cannot tell. How far it extended is left obscure. Was all the large quantity of water in these six great vessels of stone transformed into wine, or was the change effected in the moment when the portion that was wanted was

drawn from them and on that portion only? We cannot answer the question. Probably, I think, the latter; but at all events a veil is dropped over the fact.

Only this, we see that in this miracle, even more conspicuously than in any other of our Lord's, there are no means at all employed. Sometimes He used material vehicles, anointing a man's eyes with clay, or moistening the ear with the spittle; sometimes sending a man to bathe in the Pool of Siloam; sometimes laying His hand on the sick; sometimes healing from a distance by the mere utterance of His word. But here there is not even a word; no means of any kind employed, but the silent forth-putting of His will, which, without token, without visible audible indication of any sort, passes with sovereign power into the midst of material things and there works according to His own purpose. Is not this the signature of divinity, that without means the mere forth-putting of the will is all that is wanted to mould matter as plastic to His command? It is not even, 'He spake and it was done,' but silently He willed, and 'the conscious water knew its Lord, and blushed.' This is the glory of the Incarnate Word.

Now that was no interruption of the order of things established in the Creation. There was no suspension of natural laws here. What happened was only this, that the power which generally works through mediating links came into immediate connection with the effect. What does it matter whether your engine transmits its powers through half a dozen cranks, or two or three less? What does it matter whether the chain be longer or shorter? Some parenthetical links are dropped here, that is all that is unusual. For

in all ordinary natural operations, as we call them, the profound prologue of this Gospel teaches us to believe that Christ, the Eternal Word, works according to His will. He was the Agent of creation. He is the Agent of that preservation which is only a continual creation. In Him is life, and all living things live because of the continual presence and operation upon them of His divine power. And again I say, what is phenomenal and unusual in this miracle is but the suppression of two or three of the connecting links between the continual cause of all creatural existences, and its effect. So let us learn that whether through a long chain of so-called causes, or whether close up against the effect, without the intervention of these parenthetical and transmitting media, the divine power works. The power is one, and the reason for the effect is one, that Christ ever works in the world, and is that Eternal Word, 'without whom was not anything made that was made.' 'This beginning of miracles did Christ . . . and manifested His glory.'

II. Then, again, we see here, I think, the revelation of one great purpose of our Lord's coming, to hallow all common, and especially all family, life.

What a strange contrast there is between the simple gladness of the rustic village wedding and the tremendous scene of the Temptation in the wilderness, which preceded it only by a few days! What a strange contrast there is between the sublime heights of the first chapter and the homely incident which opens the ministry! What a contrast between the rigid asceticism of the Forerunner, 'who came neither eating nor drinking,' and the Son of Man, who enters thus freely and cheerfully into the common joys and relationships of human nature! How unlike the scene at the marriage-feast

must have been to the anticipations of the half-dozen disciples that had gathered round Him, all a-tingling with expectation as to what would be the first manifestation of His Messianic power! The last thing they would have dreamed of would have been to find Him in the humble home in Cana of Galilee. Some people say 'this miracle is unworthy of Him, for it was wrought upon such a trivial occasion.' And was it a trivial occasion that prompted Him thus to commence His career, not by some high and strained and remote exhibition of more than human saintliness or power, but by entering like a Brother into the midst of common, homespun, earthly joys, and showing how His presence ennobled and sanctified these? Surely the world has gained from Him, among the many gifts that He has given to it, few that have been the fountain of more sacred sweetness and blessedness than is opened in that fact that the first manifestation of His glory had for its result the hallowing of the marriage tie.

And is it not in accordance with the whole meaning and spirit of His works that 'forasmuch as the brethren were partakers of' anything, 'He Himself likewise should take part of the same,' and sanctify every incident of life by His sharing of it? So He protests against that faithless and wicked division of life into sacred and secular, which has wrought such harm both in the sacred and in the secular regions. So He protests against the notion that religion has to do with another world rather than with this. So He protests against the narrowing conception of His work which would remove from its influence anything that interests humanity. So He says, as it were, at the very beginning of His career, 'I am a Man, and nothing that is human do I reckon foreign to Myself.'

Brethren! let us learn the lesson that all life is the region of His Kingdom; that the sphere of His rule is everything which a man can do or feel or think. Let us learn that where His footsteps have trod is hallowed ground. If a prince shares for a few moments in the festivities of his gathered people on some great occasion, how ennobled the feast seems! If he joins in their sports or in their occupations for a while as an act of condescension, how they return to them with renewed vigour! And so we. We have had our King in the midst of all our family life, in the midst of all our common duties; therefore are they consecrated. Let us learn that all things done with the consciousness of His presence are sacred. He has hallowed every corner of human life by His presence; and the consecration, like some pungent and perennial perfume, lingers for us yet in the else scentless air of daily life, if we follow His footsteps.

Sanctity is not singularity. There is no need to withdraw from any region of human activity and human interest in order to develop the whitest saintliness, the most Christlike purity. The saint is to be in the world, but not of it; like the Master, who went straight from the wilderness and its temptations to the homely gladness of the rustic marriage.

III. Still further, we have here a symbol of Christ's glory as the ennobler and heightener of all earthly joys.

That may be taken with perhaps a permissible play of fancy as one meaning, at any rate, of the transformation of water into wine; the less savoury and fragrant and powerful liquid into the more so. Wine, in the Old Testament especially, is the symbol of gladness, and though it received a deeper and a sacred meaning in the New Testament as being the emblem of

His blood shed for us, it is the Old Testament point of view that prevails here. And therefore, I say, we may read in the incident the symbol of His transforming power. He comes, the Man of Sorrows, with the gift of joy in His hand. It is not an unworthy object—not unworthy, I mean, of a divine sacrifice—to make men glad. It is worth His while to come from Heaven to agonise and to die, in order that He may sprinkle some drops of incorruptible and everlasting joy over the weary and sorrowful hearts of earth. We do not always give its true importance to gladness in the economy of our lives, because we are so accustomed to draw our joys from ignoble sources that in most of our joys there is something not altogether creditable or lofty. But Christ came to bring gladness, and to transform its earthly sources into heavenly fountains; and so to change all the less sweet, satisfying, and potent draughts which we take from earth's cisterns into the wine of the Kingdom; the new wine, strong and invigorating, 'making glad the heart of man.'

Our commonest blessings, our commonest joys, if only they be not foul and filthy, are capable of this transformation. Link them with Christ; be glad in Him. Bring Him into your mirth, and it will change its character. Like a taper plunged into a jar of oxygen, it will blaze up more brightly. Earth, at its best and highest, without Him is like some fair landscape lying in the shadow; and when He comes to it, it is like the same scene when the sun blazes out upon it, flashes from every bend of the rippling river, brings beauty into many a shady corner, opens all the flowering petals and sets all the birds singing in the sky. The whole scene changes when a beam of light from Him falls upon earthly joys. He will transform them

and ennoble them and make them perpetual. Do not meddle with mirth over which you cannot make the sign of the Cross and ask Him to bless it; and do not keep Him out of your gladness, or it will leave bitterness on your lips, howsoever sweet it tastes at first.

Ay! and not only can this Master transform the water at the marriage feast into the wine of gladness, but the cups that we all carry, into which our tears have dropped—upon these too He can lay His hand and change them into cups of blessing and of salvation.

‘Blessed are they . . . who, passing through the valley of weeping, gather their tears into a well; the rain also covereth it with blessings.’ So the old Psalm put the thought that sorrow may be turned into a solemn joy, and may lie at the foundation of our most flowery fruitfulness. And the same lesson we may learn from this symbol. The Christ who transforms the water of earthly gladness into the wine of heavenly blessedness, can do the same thing for the bitter waters of sorrow, and can make them the occasions of solemn joy. When the leaves drop we see through the bare branches. Shivering and cold they may look, but we see the stars beyond, and that is better. ‘This beginning of miracles’ will Jesus repeat in every sad heart that trusts itself to Him.

IV. And last of all, we have here a token of His glory as supplying the deficiencies of earthly sources.

‘His mother saith unto Him, “They have no wine.”’ The world’s banquet runs out, Christ supplies an infinite gift. These great water-pots that stood there, if the whole contents of them were changed, as is possible, contained far more than sufficient for the modest wants of the little company. The water that flowed from each of them, in obedience to the touch of

the servant's hand, if the change were effected then, as is possible, would flow on so long as any thirsted or any asked. And Christ gives to each of us, if we choose, a fountain that will spring unto life eternal. And when the world's platters are empty, and the world's cups are all drained dry, He will feed and satisfy the immortal hunger and the blessed thirst of every spirit that longs for Him.

The rude speech of the governor of the feast may lend itself to another aspect of this same thought. He said, in jesting surprise, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now,' whereas the world gives its best first, and when the palate is dulled and the appetite diminished, then 'that which is worse.' How true that is; how tragically true in some of our lives! In the individual the early days of hope and vigour, when all things were fresh and wondrous, when everything was apparelled in the glory of a dream,' contrast miserably with the bitter experiences of life that most of us have made. Habit comes, and takes the edge off everything. We drag remembrance, like a lengthening chain, through all our life; and with remembrance come remorse and regret. 'The vision splendid' no more attends men, as they plod on their way through the weariness of middle life, or pass down into the deepening shadows of advancing and solitary old age. The best comes first, for the men who have no good but this world's. And some of you have got nothing in your cups but dregs that you scarcely care to drink.

But Jesus Christ keeps the best till the last. His gifts become sweeter every day. No time can cloy them. Advancing years make them more precious and more necessary. The end is better in this course than the beginning. And when life is over, and we pass

into the heavens, the word will come to our lips, with surprise and with thankfulness, as we find how much better it all is than we had ever dreamed it should be: 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

Oh, my brother! do not touch that cup that is offered to you by the harlot world, spiced and fragrant and foaming; 'at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' But take the pure joys which the Christ, loved, trusted, obeyed, summoned to your feast and welcomed in your heart, will bring to you; and these shall grow and greaten until the perfection of the Heavens.

CHRIST CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

'Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise.'—JOHN II. 16.

THE other Evangelists do not record this cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Christ's ministry, but, as we all know, tell of a similar act at its very close. John, on the other hand, has no notice of the latter incident. The question, then, naturally arises, are these diverse narratives accounts of the same event? The answer seems to me to be in the negative, because John's Gospel is evidently intended to supplement the other three, and to record incidents either unknown to, or unnoticed by, them, and, as a matter of fact, the whole of this initial visit of our Lord to Jerusalem is omitted by the three Evangelists. Then the two incidents are distinctly different in tone, in setting, and in the words with which our Lord accompanies them. They are both appropriate in the place in which they stand, the one as the initial and the other as all but

the final act of His Messiahship. So we may learn from the repetition of this cleansing the solemn lesson: that outward reformation of religious corruptions is of small and transient worth. For in three years—perhaps in as many weeks—the abuse that He corrected returned in full force.

Now, this narrative has many points of interest, but I think I shall best bring out its meaning if I remind you, by way of introduction, that the Temple of Jerusalem was succeeded by the Temple of the Christian Church, and that each individual Christian man is a temple. So there are three things that I want to set before you: what Christ did in the Temple; what He does in the Church; what He will do to each of us if we will let Him.

I. First, then, what Christ did in the Temple.

Now, the scene in our narrative is not unlike that which may be witnessed in any Roman Catholic country in the cathedral *place* or outside the church on the saint's day, where there are long rows of stalls, fitted up with rosaries, and images of the saint, and candles, and other apparatus for worship.

The abuse had many practical grounds on which it could be defended. It was very convenient to buy sacrifices on the spot, instead of having to drag them from a distance. It was no less convenient to be able to exchange foreign money, possibly bearing upon it the head of an emperor, for the statutory half-shekel. It was profitable to the sellers, and no doubt to the priests, who were probably sleeping partners in the concern, or drew rent for the ground on which the stalls stood. And so, being convenient for all and profitable to many, the thing became a recognised institution.

Being familiar it became legitimate, and no one thought of any incongruity in it until this young Nazarene felt a flash of zeal for the sanctity of His Father's house consuming Him. Catching up some of the reeds which served as bedding for the cattle, He twisted them into the semblance of a scourge, which could hurt neither man nor beast. He did not use it. It was a symbol, not an instrument. According to the reading adopted in the Revised Version, it was the sheep and cattle, not their owners, whom He 'drove out.' And then, dropping the scourge, He turned to the money-changers, and, with the same hand, overthrew their tables. And then came the turn of the sellers of doves. He would not hurt the birds, nor rob their owners. And so He neither overthrew nor opened the cages, but bade them 'Take these things hence'; and then came the illuminating words, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise.'

Now this incident is very unlike our Lord's usual method, even if we do not exaggerate the violence which He employed. It is unlike in two respects: in the use of compulsion, and in aiming at mere outward reformation. And both of these points are intimately connected with its place in His career.

It was the first public appearance of Jesus before His nation as Messiah. He inaugurates His work by a claim—by an act of authority—to be the King of Israel and the Lord of the Temple. If we remember the words from the last prophet, in which Malachi says that 'the Messenger of the Covenant . . . shall suddenly come to His Temple, and purify the sons of Levi,' we get the significance of this incident. We have to mark in it our Lord's deliberate assumption of the rôle of Messiah; His shaping His conduct so as to

recall to all susceptible hearts that last utterance of prophecy, and to recognise the fact that at the beginning of His career He was fully conscious of His Sonship, and inaugurated His work by the solemn appeal to the nation to recognise Him as their Lord.

And this is the reason, as I take it, why the anomalous incident is in its place at the beginning of His career no less than the repetition of it was at the close. And this is the explanation of the anomaly of the incident. It is His solemn, authoritative claiming to be God's Messenger, the Messiah long foretold.

Then, further, this incident is a singular manifestation of Christ's unique power. How did it come that all these sordid hucksters had not a word to say, and did not lift a finger in opposition, or that the Temple Guard offered no resistance, and did not try to quell the unseemly disturbance, or that the very officials, when they came to reckon with Him, had nothing harsher to say than, 'What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things'? No miracle is needed to explain that singular acquiescence. We see in lower forms many instances of a similar thing. A man ablaze with holy indignation, and having a secret ally in the hearts of those whom He rebukes, will awe a crowd even if he does not infect them. But that is not the full explanation. I see here an incident analogous to that strange event at the close of Christ's ministry, when, coming out from beneath the shadows of the olives in the garden, He said to the soldiers 'Whom seek ye?' and they fell backwards and wallowed on the ground. An overwhelming impression of His personal majesty, and perhaps some forth-putting of that hidden glory which did swim up to the surface on the mountain of Transfiguration, bowed all these

men before Him, like reeds before the wind. And though there was no recognition of His claim, there was something in the Claimant that forbade resistance and silenced remonstrance.

Further, this incident is a revelation of Christ's capacity for righteous indignation. No two scenes can be more different than the two recorded in this chapter: the one that took place in the rural seclusion of Cana, nestling among the Galilean hills, the other that was done in the courts of the Temple swarming with excited festival-keepers; the one hallowing the common joys of daily life, the other rebuking the profanation of what assumed to be a great deal more sacred than a wedding festival; the one manifesting the love and sympathy of Jesus, His power to ennoble all human relationships, and His delight in ministering to need and bringing gladness, and the other setting forth the sterner aspect of His character as consumed with holy zeal for the sanctity of God's name and house. Taken together, one may say that they cover the whole ground of His character, and in some very real sense are a summary of all His work. The programme contains the whole of what is to follow hereafter.

We may well take the lesson, which no generation ever needed more than the present, both by reason of its excellences and of its defects, that there were no love worthy of a perfect spirit in which there did not lie dormant a dark capacity of wrath, and that Christ Himself would not have been the Joy-bringer, the sympathising Gladdener which He manifested Himself as being in the 'beginning of miracles in Cana of Galilee' unless, side by side, there had lain in Him the power of holy indignation and, if need be, of stern

rebuke. Brethren, we must retain our conception of His anger if we are not to maim our conception of His love. There is no wrath like the wrath of the Lamb. The Temple court, with the strange figure of the Christ with a scourge in His hand, is a revelation which this generation, with its exaggerated sentimentalism, with its shrinking, by reason of its good and of its evil, from the very notion of a divine retribution based upon the eternal antagonism between good and evil, most sorely needs.

II. Now, secondly, notice what Christ does in His Church.

I need not remind you how God's method of restoration is always to restore with a difference and a progress. The ruined Temple on Zion was not to be followed by another house of stone and lime, but by 'a spiritual house,' builded together for 'a habitation of God in the Spirit.' The Christian Church takes the place of that material sanctuary, and is the dwelling-place of God.

That being so, let us take the lesson that that house, too, may be desecrated. There may be, as there were in the original Temple, the externals of worship, and yet, eating out the reality of these, there may be an inward mercenary spirit.

Note how insensibly such corruption creeps in to a community. You cannot embody an idea in a form or in an external association without immediately dragging it down, and running the risk of degradation. It is just like a drop of quicksilver which you cannot expose to the air but instantaneously its brightness is dimmed by the scum that forms on its surface. A church as an outward institution is exposed to all the dangers to which other institutions are exposed. And

these creep on insensibly, as this abuse had crept on. So it is not enough that we should be at ease in our consciences in regard to our practices as Christian communities. We become familiar with any abuse, and as we become familiar we lose the power of rightly judging of it. Therefore conscience needs to be guided and enlightened quite as much as to be obeyed.

How long has it taken the Christian Church to learn the wickedness of slavery? Has the Christian Church yet learned the unchristianity of War? Are there no abuses amongst us, which subsequent generations will see to be so glaring that they will talk about us as we talk about our ancestors, and wonder whether we were Christians at all when we could tolerate such things? They creep on gradually, and they need continual watchfulness if they are not to assume the mastery.

The special type of corruption which we find in this incident is one that besets the Church always. Of course, if I were preaching to ministers, I should have a great deal to say about that. For men that are necessarily paid for preaching have a sore temptation to preach for pay. But it is not only we professionals who have need to lay to heart this incident. It is all Christian communities, established and non-established churches, Roman Catholic and Protestant. The same danger besets them all. There must be money to work the outward business of the house of God. But what about people that 'run' churches as they run mills? What about people whose test of the prosperity of a Christian community is its balance-sheet? What about the people that hang on to religious communities and services for the sake of what they can make out of them? We have heard a great deal lately about what would happen 'if Christ came to Chicago.' If Christ

came to any community of professing Christians in this land, do you not think He would need to have the scourge in His hand, and to say 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise'? He will come; He does come; He is always coming if we would listen to Him. And at long intervals He comes in some tremendous and manifest fashion, and overthrows the money-changers' tables.

Ah, brethren! if Jesus Christ had not thus come, over and over again, to His Church, Christian men would have killed Christianity long ago. Did you ever think that Christianity is the only religion that has shown recuperative power and that has been able to fling off its peccant humours? They used to say—I do not know whether it is true or not—that Thames water was good to put on board ship because of its property of corrupting and then clearing itself, and becoming fit to drink. We and our brethren, all through the ages, have been corrupting the Water of Life. And how does it come to be sweet and powerful still? This tree has substance in it when it casts its leaves. That unique characteristic of Christianity, its power of reformation, is not self-reformation, but it is a coming of the Lord to His temple to 'purify the sons of Levi, that their offering may be pleasant as in days of yore.'

So one looks upon the spectacle of churches labouring under all manner of corruptions; and one need not lose heart. The shortest day is the day before the year turns; and when the need is sorest the help is nearest. And so I, for my part, believe that very much of the organisations of all existing churches will have to be swept away. But I believe too, with all my heart—and I hope that you do—that, though the precious wheat is riddled in the sieve, and the chaff

falls to the ground, not one grain will go through the meshes. Whatever becomes of churches, the Church of Christ shall never have its strength so sapped by abuses that it must perish, or its lustre so dimmed that the Lord of the Temple must depart from His sanctuary.

III. Lastly, note what Christ will do for each of us if we will let Him.

It is not a community only which is the temple of God. For the Apostles in many places suggest, and in some distinctly say, 'ye are the temples' individually, as well as the Temple collectively, of the Most High. And so every Christian soul—by virtue of that which is the deepest truth of Christianity, the indwelling of Christ in men's hearts by faith—is a temple of God; and every human soul is meant to be and may become such. That temple can be profaned. There are many ways in which professing Christians make it a house of merchandise. There are forms of religion which are little better than chaffering with God, to give Him so much service if He will repay us with so much Heaven. There are too many temptations, to which we yield, to bring secular thoughts into our holiest things. Some of us, by reason not of wishing wealth but of dreading penury, find it hard to shut worldly cares out of our hearts. We all need to be on our guard lest the atmosphere in which we live in this great city shall penetrate even into our moments of devotion, and the noise of the market within earshot of the Holy of Holies shall disturb the chant of the worshippers. It is Manchester's temptation, and it is one that most of us need to be guarded against.

So engrossed, and, as we should say, necessarily engrossed—or, at all events, legitimately engrossed—are we in the pursuits of our daily commerce, that we

have scarcely time enough or leisure of heart and mind enough to come into 'the secret place of the Most High.' The worshippers stop outside trading for beasts and doves, and they have no time to go into the Temple and present their offerings.

It is our besetting danger. Forewarned is forearmed, to some extent. Would that we could all hear, as we go about our ordinary avocations, that solemn voice, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise,' and could keep the inner sanctuary still from the noises, and remote from the pollutions, of the market hard by!

We cannot cast out these or any other desecrating thoughts and desires by ourselves, except to a very small degree. And if we do, then there happens what our Lord warned us against in profound words. The house may be emptied of the evil tenant in some measure by our own resolution and self-reformation. But if it is not occupied by Him, it remains 'empty,' though it is 'swept and garnished.' Nature abhors a vacuum, and into the empty house there come the old tenant and seven brethren blacker than himself. The only way to keep the world out of my heart is to have Christ filling it. If we will ask Him He will come to us. And if He has the scourge in His hand, let Him be none the less welcome a guest for that. He will come, and when He enters, it will be like the rising of the sun, when all the beasts of the forest slink away and lay them down in their dens. It will be like the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of the whole earth into the temple of Dagon, when the fish-like image fell prone and mutilated on the threshold. If we say to Him, 'Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the Ark of Thy strength,' He will enter

in, and by His entrance will 'make the place of His feet glorious' and pure.

THE DESTROYERS AND THE RESTORER

'Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'—JOHN II. 19.

THIS is our Lord's answer to the Jewish request for a sign which should warrant His action in cleansing the Temple. There are two such cleansings recorded in the Gospels; this one His first public act, and another, omitted by John, but recorded in the other Gospels, which was almost His last public act.

It has been suggested that these are but two versions of one incident; and although there is no objection in principle to admitting the possibility of that explanation, yet in fact it appears to me insufficient and unnecessary. For each event is appropriate in its own place. In each there is a distinct difference in tone. The incident recorded in the present chapter has our Lord's commentary, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise'; in that recorded in the Synoptic Gospels the profanation is declared as greater, and the rebuke is more severe. The 'house of merchandise' has become, by their refusal to render to Him what was His, 'a den of thieves.' In the later incident there is a reference in our Lord's quotation from the Old Testament to the entrance of the Gentiles into the Kingdom. There is no such reference here. In the other Gospels there is no record of this question which the Jews asked, nor of our Lord's significant answer, whilst yet a caricatured and mistaken version of that answer was known to the other Evangelists, and is

put by them into the mouths of the false witnesses at our Lord's trial. They thus attest the accuracy of our narrative even while they seem not to have known of the incident.

All these things being taken into account, I think that we have to do with a double, of which there are several instances in the Gospels, the same event recurring under somewhat varied circumstances, and reflecting varied aspects of truth. But it is to our Lord's words in vindication of His right to cleanse the Temple rather than to the incident on which they are based that I wish to turn your attention now: 'Destroy this Temple,' said our Lord, as His sufficient and only answer to the demand for a sign, 'and in three days I will raise it up.'

Now these words, enigmatical as they are, seem to me to be very profound and significant; and I wish, on this Easter Sunday, to look at them as throwing a light upon the gladness of this day. They suggest to me three things: I find in them, first, an enigmatical forecast of our Lord's own history; second, a prophetic warning of Israel's; and last, a symbolical foreshadowing of His world-wide work as the Restorer of man's destructions. 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

I. First then, I think, we see here an enigmatical forecast of our Lord's own history.

Notice, first, that marvellous and unique consciousness of our Lord's as to His own dignity and nature 'He spake of the temple of His body.' Think that here is a man, apparently one of ourselves, walking amongst us, living the common life of humanity, who declares that in Him, in an altogether solitary and peculiar fashion, there abides the fulness of Deity.

Think that there has been a Man who said, 'In this place is One greater than the Temple.' And people have believed Him, and do believe Him, and have found that the tremendous audacity of the words is simple verity, and that Christ is, in inmost reality, all which the Temple was but in the poorest symbol. In it there had dwelt, though there dwelt no longer at the time when He was speaking, a material and symbolical brightness, the expression of something which, for want of a better name, we call the 'presence of God.' But what was that flashing fire between the cherubim that brooded over the Mercy-seat, with a light that was lambent and lustrous as the light of love and of life—what was that to the glory, moulded in meekness and garbed in gentleness, the glory that shone, merciful and hospitable and inviting—a tempered flame on which the poorest, diseased, blind eyes could look, and not wince—from the face and from the character of Jesus Christ the Lord? He is greater than the Temple, for in Him, in no symbol but in reality, abode and abides the fulness of that unnameable Being whom we name Father and God. And not only does the fulness abide, but in Him that awful Remoteness becomes for us a merciful Presence; the infinite abyss and closed sea of the divine nature hath an outlet, and becomes a 'river of water of life.' And as the ancient name of that Temple was the 'Tent of Meeting,' the place where Israel and God, in symbolical and ceremonial form, met together, so, in inmost reality in Christ's nature, Manhood and Divinity cohere and unite, and in Him all of us, the weak, the sinful, the alien, the rebellious, may meet our Father. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' 'In this place is One greater than the Temple.'

And so this Jewish Peasant, at the very beginning of His earthly career, stands up there, in the presence of the ancestral sanctities and immemorial ceremonials which had been consecrated by all these ages and commanded by God Himself, and with autocratic hand sweeps them all on one side, as one that should draw a curtain that the statue might be seen, and remains poised Himself in the vacant place, that all eyes may look upon Him, and on Him alone. 'Destroy this Temple. . . . He spake of the temple of His body.'

Still further, notice how here we have, at the very beginning of our Lord's career, His distinct prevision of how it was all going to end. People that are willing to honour Jesus Christ, and are not willing to recognise His death as the great purpose for which He came, tell us that, like as with other reformers and heroes and martyrs, His death was the result of the failure of His purpose. And some of them talk to us very glibly, in their so-called 'Lives of Jesus Christ,' about the alteration in Christ's plan which came when He saw that His message was not going to be received. I do not enter upon all the reasons why such a construction of Christ's work cannot hold water, but here is one—for any one who believes this story before us—that at the very beginning, before He had gone half a dozen steps in His public career, when the issues of the experiment, if it was a man that was making the experiment, were all untried; when, if it were merely a martyr-enthusiast that was beginning his struggle, some flickering light of hope that He would be received of His brethren must have shone, or He would never have ventured upon the path—that then, with no mistake, with no illusion, with no expectation of a welcome and a Hosanna, but with the clearest certitude of what lay

before Him, our Lord *beheld* and accepted His Cross. Its shadow fell upon His path from the beginning, because the Cross was the purpose for which He came. 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world,' said He—when the reality of it was almost within arm's length of Him—'to bear witness to the Truth,' and His bearing witness to the truth was perfected and accomplished on the Cross. Here, at the very commencement of His career, we have it distinctly set forth, 'the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many.'

And, brethren, that fact is important, not only because it helps us to understand that His death is the centre of His work, but also because it helps us to a loving and tender thought of Him, how all His life long, with that issue distinctly before Him, He journeyed towards it of His own loving will; how every step that He took on earth's flinty roads, taken with bleeding and pure feet, He took knowing whither He was going. This Isaac climbs the mountain to the place of sacrifice, with no illusions as to what He is going up the mountain for. He knows that He goes up to be the lamb of the offering, and knowing it, He goes. Therefore let us love Him with love as persistent as was His own, who discerning the end from the beginning, willed to be born and to live because He had resolved to die, for you and me and every man.

And then, further, we have here our Lord's claim to be Himself the Agent of His own resurrection. 'I will raise it up in three days.' Of course, in Scripture, we more frequently find the Resurrection treated as being the result of the power of God the Father. We more ordinarily read that Christ was raised; but sometimes we read, as here, that Christ rises, and we have solemn

words of His own, 'I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' Think of a man saying, 'I am going to bring My own body from the dust of death,' and think of the man who said that *doing* it. If that is true, if this prediction was uttered, and being uttered was fulfilled—what then? I do not need to answer the question. My brother, this day declares that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 'Destroy this Temple'—there is a challenge—'and in three days I will raise it up'; and He did it. And He is the Lord of the Temple as well as the Temple. Down on your knees before Him, with all your hearts and with all your confidence, and worship, and trust, and love for evermore 'the Second Man,' who 'is the Lord from Heaven!'

II. Now let us turn to the other aspects of these words. I think we see here, in the next place, a prophetic warning of the history of the men to whom He was speaking.

There must be a connection between the interpretation of the words which our Evangelist assures us is the correct one, and the interpretation which would naturally have occurred to a listener, that by 'this Temple' our Lord really meant simply the literal building in which He spoke. There is such a connection, and though our Lord did not only mean the Temple, He *did* mean the Temple. To say so is not forcing double meanings in any fast and loose fashion upon Scripture, nor playing with ambiguities, nor indulging in any of the vices to which spiritualising interpretation of Scripture leads, but it is simply grasping the central idea of the words of my text. Rightly understood they lead us to this: 'The death of Christ was the destruction of the Jewish Temple

and polity, and the raising again of Christ from the dead on the third day was the raising again of that destroyed Theocracy and Temple in a new and nobler fashion.' Let us then look for a moment, and it shall only be for a moment, at these two thoughts.

If any one had said to any of that howling mob that stood round Christ at the judgment-seat of the High Priest, and fancied themselves condemning Him to death, because He had blasphemed the Temple: 'You, at this moment, are pulling down the holy and beautiful house in which your fathers praised; and what you are doing now is the destruction of your national worship and of yourselves,' the words would have been received with incredulity; and yet they were simple truth. Christ's death destroyed that outward Temple. The veil was 'rent in twain from the top to the bottom' at the moment He died; which was the declaration indeed that henceforward the Holiest of All was patent to the foot of every man, but was also the declaration that there was no more sanctity now within those courts, and that Temple, and priesthood, and sacrifice, and altar, and ceremonial and all, were antiquated. That 'which was perfect having come,' Christ's death having realised all which Temple-worship symbolised, that which was the shadow was put away when the substance appeared.

And in another fashion, it is also true that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, inflicted by Jewish hands, was the destruction of the Jewish worship, in the way of natural sequence and of divine chastisement. When the husbandmen rejected the Son who was sent 'last of all,' there was nothing more for it but that they should be 'cast out of the vineyard,' and the firebrand which the Roman soldier, forty years afterwards,

tossed into the Holiest of All, and which burned the holy and beautiful house with fire, was lit on the day when Israel cried 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!'

Oh, brethren! what a lesson it is to us all of how blind even so-called religious zeal may be; how often it is true that men in their madness and their ignorance destroy the very institutions which they are trying to conserve! How it warns us to beware lest we, unknowing what we are about, and thinking that we are fighting for the honour of God, may really all the while be but serving ourselves and rejecting His message and His Messenger!

And then let me remind you that another thing is also true, that just as the Jewish rejection of Christ was their own rejection as the people of God, and their attempted destruction of Christ the destruction of the Jewish Temple, so the other side of the truth is also here, viz. that His rising again is the restoration of the destroyed Temple in nobler and fairer form. Of course the one real Temple is the body of Jesus Christ, as we have said, where sacrifice is offered, where God dwells, where men meet with God. But in a secondary and derivative sense, in the place of the Jewish Temple has come the Christian Church, which is, in a far deeper and more inward fashion, what that ancient system aspired to be.

Christ has builded up the Church on His Resurrection. On His Resurrection, I say, for there is nothing else on which it could rest. If men ask me what is the great evidence of Christ's Resurrection, my answer is—the existence in the world of a Church. Where did it come from? How is it possible to conceive that without the Resurrection of Jesus Christ such a structure as the Christian society should have been built upon a

dead man's grave? It would have gone to pieces, as all similar associations would have gone. What had happened after that moment of depression which scattered them every man to his own, and led some of them to say, with pathetic use of the past tense to describe their vanished expectations, '*We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel*'? What was the force that instead of driving them asunder drew them together? What was the power that, instead of quenching their almost dead hopes, caused them to flame up with renewed vigour heaven-high? How came it that that band of cowardly, dispirited Jewish peasants, who scattered in selfish fear and heart-sick disappointment, were in a few days found bearding all antagonism, and convinced that their hopes had only erred by being too faint and dim? The only answer is in their own message, which explained it all: '*Him hath God raised from the dead, whereof we are all witnesses.*'

The destroyed Temple disappears, and out of the dust and smoke of the vanishing ruins there rises, beautiful and serene, though incomplete and fragmentary and defaced with many a stain, the fairer reality, the Church of the living Christ. '*Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*'

III. Lastly, we have here a foreshadowing of our Lord's world-wide work as the Restorer of man's destructions.

Man's folly, godlessness, worldliness, lust, sin, are ever working to the destruction of all that is sacred in humanity and in life, and to the desecrating of every shrine. We ourselves, in regard to our own hearts, which are made to be the temples of the '*living God*,' are ever, by our sins, shortcomings, and selfishness,

bringing pollution into the holiest of all; 'breaking down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers,' and setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy places of our hearts. We pollute them all—conscience, imagination, memory, will, intellect. How many a man listening to me now has his nature like the façade of some of our cathedrals, with the empty niches and broken statues proclaiming that wanton desecration and destruction have been busy there?

My brother! what have you done with your heart? 'Destroy this temple.' Christ spoke to men who did not know what they were doing; and He speaks to you. It is the inmost meaning of the life of many of you. Hour by hour, day by day, action by action, you are devastating and profaning the sanctities of your nature, and the sacred places there where God ought to live.

Listen to His confident promise. He knows that in me He is able to restore to more than pristine beauty all which I, by my sin, have destroyed; to reconsecrate all which I, by my profanity, have polluted; to cast out the evil deities that desecrate and deform the shrine; and to make my poor heart, if only I will let Him come in to the ruined chamber, a fairer temple and dwelling-place of God.

'In three days,' does He do it? In one sense—Yes! Thank God! the power that hallows and restores the desecrated and cast-down temple in a man's heart, was lodged in the world in those three days of death and resurrection. The fact that He 'died for our sins,' the fact that He was 'raised again for our justification,' are the plastic and architectonic powers which will build up any character into a temple of God.

And yet more than 'forty and six years' will that

temple have to be 'in building.' It is a lifelong task till the top-stone be brought forth. Only let us remember this: Christ, who is Architect and Builder, Foundation and Top-stone; ay! and Deity indwelling in the temple, and building it by His indwelling—this Christ is not one of those who 'begin to build and are not able to finish.' He realises all His plans. There are no ruined edifices in 'the City'; nor any half-finished fanes of worship within the walls of that great Jerusalem whose builder and maker is Christ.

If you will put yourselves in His hands, and trust yourselves to Him, He will take away all your incompleteness, and will make you body, soul, and spirit, temples of the Lord God; as far above the loftiest beauty and whitest sanctity of any Christian character here on earth as is the building of God, 'the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' above 'the earthly house of this tabernacle.'

He will perfect this restoring work at the last, when His Word to His servant Death, as He points him to us, shall be 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up.'

TEACHER OR SAVIOUR?

'The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.'—JOHN III. 2.

THE connection in which the Evangelist introduces the story of Nicodemus throws great light on the aspect under which we are to regard it. He has just been saying that upon our Lord's first visit to Jerusalem at the Passover there was a considerable amount of interest excited, and a kind of imperfect faith in

Him drawn out, based solely on His miracles. He adds that this faith was regarded by Christ as unreliable; and he goes on to explain that our Lord exercised great reserve in His dealings with the persons who professed it, for the reason that 'He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.'

Now, if you note that reiteration of the word 'man,' you will understand the description which is given of the person who is next introduced. 'He knew what was in man. There was *a man* of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.' It would have been enough to have said, 'There was *a Pharisee*.' When John says '*a man* of the Pharisees,' he is not merely carried away by the echo in his ears of his own last words, but it is as if he had said, 'Now, here is one illustration of the sort of thing that I have been speaking about; one specimen of an imperfect faith built upon miracles; and one illustration of the way in which Jesus Christ dealt with it.'

Nicodemus was 'a Pharisee.' That tells us the school to which he belonged, and the general drift of his thought. He was 'a ruler of the Jews.' That tells us that he held an official position in the supreme court of the nation, to which the Romans had left some considerable shadow of power in ecclesiastical matters. And this man comes to Christ and acknowledges Him. Christ deals with him in a very suggestive fashion. His confession, and the way in which our Lord received it, are what I desire to consider briefly in this sermon.

I. Note then, first, this imperfect confession.

Everything about it, pretty nearly, is wrong. 'He came to Jesus by night,' half-ashamed and wholly afraid of speaking out the conviction that was work-

ing in him. He was a man in position. He could not compromise himself in the eyes of his co-Sanhedrists. 'It would be a grave thing for a man like me to be found in converse with this new Rabbi and apparent Prophet. I must go cautiously, and have regard to my reputation and my standing in the world; and shall steal to Him by night.' There is something wrong with any convictions about Jesus Christ which let themselves be huddled up in secret. The true apprehension of Him is like a fire in a man's bones, that makes him 'weary of forbearing' when he locks his lips, and forces him to speak. If Christians can be dumb, there is something dreadfully wrong with their Christianity. If they do not regard Jesus Christ in such an aspect as to oblige them to stand out in the world and say, 'Whatever anybody says or thinks about it, I am Christ's man,' then be sure that they do not yet know Him as they ought to do.

Nicodemus 'came to Jesus by night,' and therein condemned himself. He said, 'Rabbi, we know.' There is more than a *soupeçon* of patronage in that. He is giving Jesus Christ a certificate, duly signed and sealed by Rabbinical authority. He evidently thinks that it is no small matter that he and some of his fellows should have been disposed to look with favour upon this new Teacher. And so he comes, if not patronising the young man, at all events extremely conscious of his own condescension in recognising Him with his 'We know.'

Had he the right to speak for any of his colleagues? If so, then at that very early stage of our Lord's ministry there was a conviction beginning to work in that body of ecclesiastics which casts a very lurid light on their subsequent proceedings. It was a good long while after, when Jesus Christ's attitude towards them had

been a little more clearly made out than it was at the beginning, that they said officially, 'As for this fellow, we know not whence He is.' They 'knew' when He did not seem to be trenching on their prerogatives, or driving His Ithuriel-spear through their traditional professions of orthodoxy and punctilious casuistries. But when He trod on their toes, when He ripped up their pretensions, when He began to show His antagonism to their formalism and traditionalism, *then* they did not know where He came from. And there are many of us who are very polite to Jesus Christ as long as He does not interfere with us, and who begin to doubt His authority when He begins to rebuke our sins.

The man that said 'We know,' and then proceeded to tell Christ the grounds upon which He was accepted by him, was not in the position which becomes sinful men drawing near to their Saviour. 'We know that Thou art a Teacher'—contrast that, with its ring of complacency, and, if not superior, at least co-ordinate, authority, with 'Jesus! Master! have mercy on me,' or with 'Lord! save or I perish,' and you get the difference between the way in which a formalist, conceited of his knowledge, and a poor, perishing sinner, conscious of his ignorance and need, go to the Saviour.

Further, this imperfect confession was of secondary value, because it was built altogether upon miraculous evidence. Now, there has been a great deal of exaggeration about the value of the evidence of miracle. The undue elevation to which it was lifted in the apologetic literature of the eighteenth century, when it was almost made out as if there was no other proof that Jesus came from God than that He wrought miracles, has naturally led, in this generation and in the last one, to an equally

exaggerated undervaluing of its worth. Jesus Christ did appeal to signs; He did also most distinctly place faith that rested merely upon miracle as second best; when He said, for instance, 'If ye believe not Me, yet believe the works.' Nicodemus says, 'We know that Thou art a Teacher sent from God, because no man can do these miracles except God be with him.' Ah! Nicodemus! did not the substance of the teaching reveal the source of the teaching even more completely than the miracles that accompanied it? Surely, if I may use an old illustration, the bell that rings in to the sermon (which is the miracles) is less conclusive as to the divine source of the teaching than is the sermon itself. Christ Himself is His own best evidence, and His words shine in their own light, and need no signs in order to authenticate their source. The signs are there, and are precious in my eyes less as credentials of His authority than as revelations of His character and His work. They are wonders; that is much. They are proofs; as I believe. But, high above both of these characteristics, they are signs of the spiritual work that He does, and manifestations of His redeeming power. And so a faith that had no ears for the ring of the divine voice in the words, and no eyes for the beauty and perfection of the character, was vulgar and low and unreliable, inasmuch as it could give no better reason for itself than that Jesus had wrought miracles.

I need not remind you of how noticeable it is that at this very early stage in our Lord's ministry there were a sufficient number of miracles done to be qualified by the Evangelist as 'many,' and to have been a very powerful factor in bringing about this real, though imperfect, faith. John has only told us of one miracle prior to this; and the other Evangelists do not touch

upon these early days of our Lord's ministry at all. So that we are to think of a whole series of works of power and supernatural grace which have found no record in these short narratives. How much more Jesus Christ was, and did, and said, than any book can ever tell! These are but parts of His ways; a whisper of His power. The fulness of it remains unrevealed after all revelation.

But the central deficiency of this confession lies in the altogether inadequate conception of Jesus Christ and His work which it embodies. 'We know that Thou art a Teacher, a miracle-worker, a man sent from God, and in communion with Him.' These are large recognitions, far too large to be spoken of any but a select few of the sons of men. But they fall miserably beneath the grandeur, and do not even approach within sight of the central characteristic, of Christ and of His work. Nicodemus is the type of large numbers of men nowadays. All the people that have a kind of loose, superficial connection with Christianity re-echo substantially his words. They compliment Jesus Christ out of His divinity and out of His redeeming work, and seem to think that they are rather conferring an honour upon Christianity when they condescend to say, 'We, the learned pundits of literature; we, the arbiters of taste; we, the guides of opinion; we, the writers in newspapers and magazines and periodicals; we, the leaders in social and philanthropic movements—we recognise that Thou art a Teacher.' Yes, brethren, and the recognition is utterly inadequate to the facts of the case, and is insult, and not recognition.

II. Let me ask you to look now, in the next place, at the way in which Jesus Christ deals with this imperfect confession.

It was a great thing for a young Rabbi from Nazareth, who had no certificate from the authorities, to find an opening thus into the very centre of the Sanhedrim. There is nothing in life, to an ardent young soul, at the beginning of his career—especially if he feels that he has a burden laid upon him to deliver to his fellows—half so sweet as the early recognition by some man of wisdom and weight and influence, that he too is a messenger from God. In later years praise and acknowledgment cloy. And one might have expected some passing word from the Master that would have expressed such a feeling as that, if He had been only a young Teacher seeking for recognition. I remember that in that strange medley of beauty and absurdity, the Koran, somewhere or other, there is an outpouring of Mahomet's heart about the blessedness of his first finding a soul that would believe in him. And it is strange that Jesus Christ had no more welcome for this man than the story tells that He had. For He meets him without a word of encouragement; without a word that seemed to recognise even a growing and a groping confidence, and yet He would not 'quench the smoking flax.' Yes! sometimes the kindest way to deal with an imperfect conception is to show unsparingly why it is imperfect; and sometimes the apparent repelling of a partial faith is truly the drawing to Himself by the Christ of the man, though his faith be not approved.

So, notice how our Lord meets the imperfections of this acknowledgment. He begins by pointing out what is the deepest and universal need of men. Nicodemus had said, 'Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God.' And Christ says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must be born again.' What has that

to do with Nicodemus's acknowledgment? Apparently nothing; really everything. For, if you will think for a moment, you will see how it meets it precisely, and forces the Rabbi to deepen his conception of the Lord. The first thing that you and I want, for our participation in the Kingdom of God, is a radical out-and-out change in our whole character and nature. 'Ye must be born again'; now, whatever more that means, it means, at all events, this—a thorough-going renovation and metamorphosis of a man's nature, as the sorest need that the world and all the individuals that make up the world have.

The deepest ground of that necessity lies in the fact of sin. Brother, we can only verify our Lord's assertion by honestly searching the depths of our own hearts, and looking at ourselves in the light of God. Think what is meant when we say, 'He is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.' Think of that absolute purity, that, to us, awful aversion from all that is evil, from all that is sinful. Think of what sort of men they must be who can see the Lord. And then look at yourself. Are we fit to pass that threshold? Are we fit to gaze into that Face? Is it possible that we should have fellowship with Him? Oh, brethren, if we rightly meditate upon two facts, the holiness of God and our own characters, I think we shall feel that Jesus Christ has truly stated the case when He says, 'Ye must be born again.' Unless you and I can get ourselves radically changed, there is no Heaven for us; there is no fellowship with God for us. We must stand before Him, and feel that a great gulf is fixed between us and Him.

And so when a man comes with his poor little 'Thou art a Teacher,' no words are wanted in order to set in

glaring light the utter inadequacy of such a conception as that. What the world wants is not a Teacher, it is a Life-giver. What men want is not to be told the truth; they know it already. What they want is not to be told their duty; they know that too. What they want is some power that shall turn them clean round. And what each of us wants before we can see the Lord is that, if it may be, something shall lay hold of us, and utterly change our natures, and express from our hearts the black drop that lies there tainting everything.

Now, this necessity is met in Jesus Christ. For there were two 'musts' in His talk with Nicodemus, and both of them bore directly on the one purpose of deepening Nicodemus's inadequate conception of what He was and what He did. He said, 'Ye must be born again,' in order that his hearer, and we, might lay to heart this, that we need something more than a Teacher, even a Life-giver; and He said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' in order that we might all know that in Him the necessity is met, and that the Son of Man, who came down from Heaven, and is in Heaven, even whilst He is on earth, is the sole ladder by which men can ascend into Heaven and gaze upon God.

Thus it is Christ's work as Redeemer, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, Christ's power as bringing to the world a new and holy life, and breathing it into all that trust in Him, which make the very centre of His work. Set by the side of that this other, 'Thou art a Teacher sent from God.' Ah, brethren, that will not do; it will not do for you and me! We want something a great deal deeper than that. The secret of Jesus is not disclosed until we have passed into the inner shrine, where we learn that He is the Sacrifice for the world.

and the Source and Fountain of a new life. I beseech you, take Christ's way of dealing with this certificate of His character given by the Rabbi who did not know his own necessities, and ponder it.

Mark the underlying principle which is here—viz. if you want to understand Christ you must understand sin; and whoever thinks lightly of it will think meanly of Him. An underestimate of the reality, the universality, the gravity of the fact of sin lands men in the superficial and wholly impotent conception, 'Rabbi! Thou art a Teacher sent from God.' A true knowledge of myself as a sinful man, of my need of pardon, of my need of cleansing, of my need of a new nature, which must be given from above, and cannot be evolved from within, leads me, and I pray it may lead you, to cast yourself down before Him, with no complaisant words of intellectual recognition upon your lips, but with the old cry, 'Lord! be merciful to me a sinner.'

III. And now, dear friends, one last word. Notice when and where this imperfect disciple was transformed into a courageous confessor.

We do not know what came immediately of this conversation. We only know that some considerable time after, Nicodemus had not screwed himself up to the point of acknowledging out and out, like a brave man, that he was Christ's follower; but that he timidly ventured in the Sanhedrim to slip in a remonstrance ingeniously devised to conceal his own opinions, and yet to do some benefit to Christ, when he said, 'Does our law judge any man before it hear him?' And, of course, the timid remonstrance was swept aside, as it deserved to be, by the ferocious antagonism of his co-Sanhedrists.

But when the Cross came, and it had become more

dangerous to avow discipleship, he plucked up courage, or rather courage flowed into him from that Cross, and he went boldly and 'craved the body of Jesus,' and got it, and buried it. No doubt when he looked at Jesus hanging on the Cross, he remembered that night in Jerusalem when the Lord had said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' and he remembered how He had spoken about the serpent lifted in the wilderness, and a great light blazed in upon him, which for ever ended all hesitation and timidity for him. And so he was ready to be a martyr, or anything else, for the sake of Him whom he now found to be far more than a 'Teacher,' even the Sacrifice by whose stripes he was healed.

Dear brethren, I bring that Cross to you now, and pray you to see there Christ's real work for us, and for the world. He has taught us, but He has done more. He has not only spoken, He has died. He has not only shown us the path on which to walk, He has made it possible for us to walk in it. He is not merely one amongst the noble band that have guided and inspired and instructed humanity, but He stands alone—not a Teacher, but *the* Redeemer, 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.'

If He is a Teacher, take His teachings, and what are they? These, that He is the Son of God; that 'He came from God'; that He 'went to God'; that He 'gives His life a ransom for many'; that He is to be the Judge of mankind; that if we trust in Him, our sins are forgiven and our nature is renewed. Do not go picking and choosing amongst His teachings, for these which I have named are as surely His as 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' or any other of the moral teachings which the

world professes to admire. Take the whole teachings of the whole Christ, and you will confess Him to be the Redeemer of your souls, and the Life-giver by whom, and by whom alone, we enter the Kingdom of God.

WIND AND SPIRIT

'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'—JOHN iii. 8.

PERHAPS a gust of night wind swept round the chamber where Nicodemus sat listening to Jesus, and gave occasion for this condensed parable. But there is occasion sufficient for it in the word 'Spirit,' which, both in the language in which our Lord addressed the ruler of the Sanhedrim, and in that which John employed in recording the conversation, as in our own English, means both 'spirit' and 'breath.' This double signification of the word gives rise to the analogies in our text, and it also raises the question as to the precise meaning of the text. There are two alternatives, one adopted by our Authorised and Revised Version, and one which you will find relegated to the margin of the latter. We may either read 'the wind bloweth' or 'the Spirit breathes.' I must not be tempted here to enter into a discussion of the grounds upon which the one or the other of these two renderings may be preferred. Suffice it to say that I adhere to the rendering which lies before us, and find here a comparison between the salient characteristics of the physical fact and the operations of the Divine Spirit upon men's spirits.

But, then, there is another step to be taken. Our

Lord has just been laying down the principle that like begets like, that flesh produces flesh, and spirit, spirit. And so, applying that principle, He says here, not as might be expected, 'So is the work of the Divine Spirit in begetting new life in men,' but 'So is he that is born of the Spirit.' There are three things brought into relation with one another: the physical fact; the operations of the Spirit of God, of which that physical fact in its various characteristics may be taken as a symbol; and the result of its operations in the new man who is made 'after the image of Him that created him.'

It is to the last of these that I wish to turn. Here you have the ideal of the Christian life, considered as the product of the free Spirit of God, the picture of what all Christian people have the capacity of being, the obligation to be, and are, just in the measure in which that new life, which the Spirit of God bestows, is dominant in them and moulding their character. So I take these characteristics just as they arise.

I. Here you have the freedom of the new life.

'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' Of course, in these days of weather forecasts and hoisting cones, we know that the wind is subject to as rigid physical laws as any other phenomena. But Jesus Christ speaks here, as the Bible always speaks about Nature, from two points of view—one the popular, regarding the thing as it looks on the surface, and the other what I may call the poetico-devout—finding 'sermons in stones, books in the running brooks,' and hints of the spiritual world in all the phenomena of the natural. So, just as in spite of meteorological science, there has passed into common speech the proverbial simile 'as free as the wind,' so Jesus Christ says here, 'The

wind bloweth where it listeth, . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' He passes by the intermediate link, the Spirit that is the parent of the life, and deals with the resulting life and declares that it is self-impelled and self-directed. Is that a characteristic to be desired or admired? Is doing as we list precisely the description of the noblest life? It is the description of the purely animal one. It is the description of an entirely ignoble and base one. It may become the description of an atrociously criminal one. But we do not generally think that a man that says 'Thus I will; thus I command; let the fact that I will it stand in the place of all reason,' is speaking from a lofty point of view.

But there are two sorts of 'listing.' There is the listing which is the yielding to the mob of ignoble passions and clamant desires of the animal nature within us, and there is the 'listing' which is obeying the impulses of a higher will, that has been blended with ours. And there you come to the secret of true freedom, which does not consist in doing as I like, but in liking to do as God wishes me to do. When our Lord says 'where it listeth,' He implies that a change has passed over a man, when that new life is born within him, whereby the law, the known will of God, is written upon his heart, and, inscribed on these fleshly tables, becomes no longer an iron force external to him, but a vital impulse within him. That is freedom, to have my better will absolutely conterminous and coincident with the will of God, so far as I know it. Just as a man is not imprisoned by limits beyond which he has no desire to go, so freedom, and elevation, and nobility come by obeying, not the commands of an external authority, but the impulse of an inward life.

'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage,' because God hath given us the Spirit of power, and of love, and of self-control, which keeps down that base and inferior 'listing,' and elevates the higher and the nobler one. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' because duty has become delight, and there is no desire in the new and higher nature for anything except that which God enjoins. The true freedom is when, by the direction of our will, we change 'must' into 'I delight to do Thy will.' So we are set free from the bondage and burden of a law that is external, and is not loved, and are brought into the liberty of, for dear love's sake, doing the will of the beloved.

' Myself shall to my darling be
Both law and impulse,'

says one of the poets about a far inferior matter. It is true in reference to the Christian life, and the 'liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.'

But, then, in order freely to understand the sweep and the greatness of this perfect law of liberty, we must remember that the new life is implanted in us precisely in order that we may suppress, and, if need be, cast out and exorcise, that lower 'listing,' of which I have said that it is always ignoble and sometimes animal. For this freedom will bring with it the necessity for continual warfare against all that would limit and restrain it—namely, the passions and desires and inclinations of our baser or nobler, but godless, self. These are, as it were, deposed by the entrance of the new life. But it is a dangerous thing to keep dethroned and discrowned tyrants alive, and the best thing is to behead them, as well as to cast them from their throne. 'If ye, through the Spirit, do put to

death the deeds' and inclinations and wills 'of the flesh, ye shall live'; and if you do not, they will live and will kill you. So the freedom of the new life is a militant freedom, and we have to fight to maintain it. As Burke said about the political realm, 'the price of liberty is eternal vigilance,' so we say about the new life of the Christian man—he is free only on condition that he keeps well under hatches the old tyrants, who are ever plotting and struggling to have dominion once again.

Still further, whilst this new life makes us free from the harshness of a law that can only proclaim duty, and also makes us free from our own baser selves, it makes us free from all human authority. The true foundation of the Christian democracy is that each individual soul has direct and immediate access to, and direct and real possession of, God, in his spirit and life. Therefore, in the measure in which we draw into ourselves the new life and the Spirit of God shall we be independent of men round us, and be able to say, 'With me it is a very small matter to be judged of you or of man's judgment.' That new life ought to make men *original*, in the deep and true sense of the word, as drawing their conceptions of duty and their methods of life, not at second hand from other men, but straight from God Himself. If the Christian Church was fuller of that divine life than it is, it would be fuller of all varieties of Christian beauty and excellence, and all these would be the work of 'that one and the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will.' If this congregation were indeed filled with the new life, there would be an exuberance of power, and a harmonious diversity of characteristics about it, and a burning up of the conventionalities of Christian pro-

fession such as we do not dream of to-day. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.'

II. Here we have this new life in its manifestation.

'Thou hearest the sound,' or, as the Word might literally be rendered, the 'voice thereof,' from the little whisper among the young soft leaves of the opening beeches in our woods to-day, up to the typhoon that spreads devastation over leagues of tropical ocean. That voice, now a murmur, now a roar, is the only manifestation of the unseen force that sweeps around us. And if you are a Christian man or woman your new life should be thus perceptible to others, in a variety of ways, no doubt, and in many degrees of force. You cannot show its roots; you are bound to show its fruits. You cannot lay bare your spirits, and say to the world, 'Look! there is the presence of a divine germ in me,' but you can go about amongst men, and witness to the possession of it by the life that you live. There are a great many Christian people from whom, if you were to listen ever so intently, you would not hear a sigh or a ripple. There is a dead calm; the 'rushing mighty wind' has died down; and there is nothing but a greasy swell upon the windless ocean. 'The wind bloweth,' and the 'sound' is heard. The wind ceases, and there is a hideous silence. And that is the condition of many a man and woman that has a name to live and is dead. Does anybody hear the whisper of that breath in your life, Christian man? It is not for me to answer the question; it is for you to ask it and answer it for yourselves.

And Christians should be in the world, as the very breath of life amidst stagnation. When the Christian Church first sprung into being it did come into that corrupt, pestilential march of ancient heathenism with

healing on its wings, and like fresh air from the pure hills into some fever-stricken district. Wherever there has been a new outburst, in the experience of individuals and of churches, of that divine life, there has come, and the world has felt that there has come, a new force that breathes over the dry bones, and they live. Alas, alas! that so frequently the professing Christian Church has ceased to discharge its plain function, to breathe on the slain that they may live.

They are curing, or say they are curing, consumption nowadays, by taking the patient and keeping him in the open air, and letting the wind of heaven blow freely about him. That, and not shutting people in warm chambers, and coddling them with the prescriptions of social and political reformation, that is the cure for the world's diseases. Wherever the new life is vigorous in men, men will hear the sound thereof, and recognise that it comes from heaven.

III. Lastly, here we have the new life in its double secret.

I have been saying that it has a means of manifestation which all Christian people are bound to exemplify. But our Lord draws a broad distinction between that which can be manifested and that which cannot. As I said, you can show the leaves and the fruits; the roots are covered. 'Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.'

The origin of that new life is 'hid with Christ in God.' And so, since we are not dependent upon external things for the communication of the life, we should not be dependent upon them for its continuation and its nourishment, and we should realise that, if we are Christians, we are living in two regions, and, though as regards the surface life we belong to the

things of time, as regards the deepest life, we belong to eternity. All the surface springs may run dry. What then? As long as there is a deep-seated fountain that comes welling up, the fields will be green, and we may laugh at famine and drought. If it be true that 'our lives are hid with Christ in God,' then it ought to be true that the nourishments, as well as the direction and impulse of them, are drawn from Him, and that we seek not so much for the abundance of the things that minister to the external as for the fulness of those that sustain the inward, the true life, the life of Christ in the soul.

The world does not know where that Christian life comes from. If you are a Christian, you ought to bear in your character a certain indefinable something that will suggest to the people round you that the secret power of your life is other than the power which moulds theirs. You may be naturalised, and you may speak fairly well the language of the country in which you are a sojourner, but there ought to be something in your accent which tells where you come from, and betrays the foreigner. We ought to move amongst men, having about us that which cannot be explained by what is enough to explain their lives. A Christian life should be the manifestation to the world of the supernatural.

They 'know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth.' No; that new life in its feeblest infancy, and before it speaks, if I may so say, is, by its very existence, a prophet, and declares that there must be, beyond this 'bank and shoal of time,' a region to which it is native, and in which it may grow to maturity. You will find in your greenhouses exotics that stand there, after all your pains and coals, stunted, and

seeming to sigh for the tropical heat which is their home. The earnest of our inheritance, the first-fruits of the Spirit, the Christian life which originated in, and is sustained by, the flowing of the divine life into us, demands that, somehow or other, the stunted plant should be lifted and removed into that 'higher house where these are planted'—and what shall be the spread of its branches, and the lustre of its leaves, and what the gorgeousness of its blossoms, and what the perennial sweetness of its fruits then and there, 'it doth not yet appear.'

They 'know not whither it goeth.' And even those who themselves possess it know not, nor shall know, through the ages of a progressive approximation to the ever-approached and never-attained perfection. 'This spake He of the Holy Ghost, which they that believe on Him should receive.' Trust Christ, and 'the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus shall make you free from the law of sin and death.'

THE BRAZEN SERPENT

'Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.'—JOHN III. 14.

THIS is the second of the instances in this Gospel in which our Lord lays His hand upon an institution or incident of the Old Testament, as shadowing forth some aspect of His work. In the first of these instances, under the image of the ladder that Jacob saw, our Lord presented Himself as the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth; here He goes a step further into the heart of His work, and under the image, very eloquent to the Pharisee to whom He

was speaking, of the brazen serpent lifted up on the pole in the desert, proclaims Himself as the medium of healing and of life to a poisoned world.

Now, Nicodemus has a great many followers to-day. He took up a position which many take up. He recognised Christ as a Teacher, and was willing to accord to the almost unknown young man from Galilee the coveted title of 'Rabbi.' He came to Him with a little touch of condescension, and evidently thought that for him, a ruler of the Jews, a member of the upper and educated classes, to be willing to speak of Jesus as a Teacher, was an endorsement that the young aspirant might be gratified to receive. 'Rabbi, *we* know that Thou art a Teacher sent from God'—but he stopped there. He is not the only one who compliments Jesus Christ, while he degrades Him from His unique position. Now, to this inadequate conception of our Lord's Person and work, Christ opposed the solemn insistence on the incapacity of human nature as it is, to enter into communion with, and submission to, God. And then He passes on to speak—in precise parallelism with the position that He took up when He likened Himself to the Ladder of Jacob's vision—of Himself as being the Son of Man that came down from Heaven, and therefore is able to reveal heavenly things. In my text He further unveils in symbol the mystery and dignity of His Person and of His work, whilst He speaks of a mysterious lifting up of this Son of Man who came down from heaven. These are the truths that the conception of Christ as a great Teacher needs for its completion; the contrariety of human nature with the divine will, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Crucifixion of the Incarnate Son. And so we have here three points, to which I desire to turn, as setting

forth the conception of His own work which Jesus Christ presented as completing the conception of it, to which Nicodemus had attained.

I. There is, first, the lifting up of the Son of Man.

Now, of course, the sole purpose of setting that brazen serpent on the pole was to render it conspicuous, and all that Nicodemus could *then* understand by the symbol was that, in some unknown way, this heaven-descended Son of Man should be set forth before Israel and the world as being the Healer of all their diseases. But we are wiser, after the event, than the ruler of the Jews could be at the threshold of Christ's ministry. We have also to remember that this is not the only occasion, though it is the first, on which our Lord used this very significant expression. For twice over in this Gospel we find it upon His lips—once when, addressing the unbelieving multitude, He says 'When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He'; and once when in soliloquy, close on Calvary, He says, as the vision of a world flocking to Him rises before Him on occasion of the wish of a few Greek proselytes to see Him, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' We do not need, though we have, the Evangelist's commentary, 'this He spake signifying what death He should die.'

So, if we accept the historical veracity of this Gospel, we here perceive Jesus Christ, at the very beginning of His career, and before the dispositions of the nation towards Him had developed themselves in action, discerning its end, and seeing, gaunt and grim before Him, the Cross that was lifted up on Calvary. Enthusiasts and philanthropists and apostles of all sorts, in the regions of science and beneficence and morals and religion, begin their career with trusting that their

'brethren should have understood' that God was speaking through them. But no illusion of that sort, according to these Evangelists, drew Jesus Christ out of His seclusion at Nazareth and impelled Him on His career. From the beginning He knew that the Cross was to be the end. That Cross was not to Him a necessity, accepted as the price of faithfulness in doing His work, so that His attitude was, 'I will speak what is in Me, though I die for it,' but it was to Him the very heart of the work which He came to do. Therefore, after He had said to the ruler of the Jews that the Son of Man, as descended from Heaven, was able to *speak* of heavenly things, He added the deeper necessity, He 'must be lifted up.' Where lay the 'must'? In the requirement of the work which He had set Himself to do. Beneath this great saying there lies a pathetic, stern, true conception of the condition of human nature. That desert encampment, with the poisoned men dying on every hand, is the emblem under which Jesus Christ, the gentlest and the sweetest soul that ever lived, looked out upon humanity. And it was because the facts of human nature called for something far more than a teacher that He said 'the Son of Man must be lifted up.' For what they needed, and what He had set Himself to bring, could only be brought by One who yielded Himself up for the sins of the whole world.

But that 'must,' which thus arose from the requirements of the task that He had set before Him, had its source in His own heart; it was no necessity imposed upon Him from without. True, it was a necessity laid on Him by filial obedience, but also true, it was the necessity accepted by Him in pursuance of the impulse of His own heart. He must die because He must save.

and He must save because He loved. So He was not nailed to the Cross by the nails and hammers of the Roman soldiers, and the taunt that was flung at Him as He hung there had a deeper meaning, as scoffs thrown at Him and His cause ordinarily have, than the scoffers understood: 'He saved others,' and therefore 'Himself He cannot save.'

So here we have Christ accepting, as well as discerning, the Cross. And we have more than that. We have Christ looking at the Cross as being, not humiliation, but exaltation. 'The Son of Man must be lifted up.' And what does that mean? It means the same thing that He said when, near the end, He declared, 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.' We are accustomed to speak—and we speak rightly—of His death as being the lowest point of the humiliation which was inherent in the very fact of His humanity. He condescended to be born; He stooped yet more to die. But whilst that is true, the other side is also true—that in the Cross Christ is lifted up, and that it is His Throne. For what see we there? The highest exhibition, the tenderest revelation, of His perfect love. And what see we there besides? The supreme manifestation of the highest power.

'Twas great to speak a world from nought,
'Tis greater to redeem.'

To save humanity, to make it possible that men should receive that second birth, and should enter into the Kingdom of God—that was a greater work, because a work not only of creation, but of restoration, than it was to send forth the stars on their courses and to 'preserve' the ancient heavens 'from wrong.' There is

a revelation of divine might when we 'lift up our eyes on high,' and see how, 'because He is great in power, not one faileth.' But there is a mightier revelation of divine power when we see how, from amidst the ruins of humanity, He can restore the divine image, and piece together, as it were, without sign of flaw or crack or one fragment wanting, the fair image that was shattered into fragments by the blow of Sin's heavy mace. Power in its highest operation, power in its tenderest efficacy, power in its widest sweep, are set forth on the Cross of Christ, and that weak Man hanging there, dying in the dark, is 'the power of God' as well as 'the wisdom of God.' The Cross is Christ's Throne, but it is His sovereign manifestation of love and power only if it is what, as I believe He told us it was, and what His servants from His lips caught the interpretation of it as being, the death for the sins of the sin-stricken world. Unless we can believe that, when He died, He died for us, I know not why Christ's death should appeal to our love. But if we recognise—as I pray that we all may recognise—that our deep need for something far more than Teacher or Pattern has been met in that great 'one Sacrifice for sins for ever,' then the magnetism of the Cross begins to tell, and we understand what He meant when He said, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Brethren, the Cross is His Throne, from which He rules the world, and if you strike His sacrifice for sins out of your conception of His work, you have robbed Him of sovereignty, and taken out of His hand the sceptre by which He governs the hearts and wills of rebellious and restored men.

II. Notice, again, how we have here the look at the uplifted Son of Man.

I do not need to paint for you what your own imaginations can sufficiently paint for yourselves—the scene in the wilderness where the dying men from the very outskirts of the camp could turn a filmy eye to the brazen serpent hanging in their midst. That look is the symbol of what we need, in order that the life-giving power of Christ should enter into our death. There is no better description of the act of Christian faith than that picture of the dying Israelite turning his languid eye to the symbol of healing and life. That trust which Jesus emphasises here in ‘*whosoever believeth on Him*,’ He opposes very emphatically to Nicodemus’s confession, ‘We know that Thou art a Teacher.’ We know—you have to go a step further, Nicodemus! ‘We know’; well and good, but are you included in ‘*whosoever believeth*’? Faith is an advance on credence. There is an intellectual side to it, but its essence is what is the essence of trust always, the act of the will throwing itself on that which is discerned to be trustworthy. You know that a given man is reliable—that is not relying on him. You have to go a step further. And so, dear brethren, you may believe thirty-nine or thirty-nine thousand Articles with an unfaltering credence, and you may be as far away from faith as if you did not believe one of them. There may be a perfect belief and an absolute want of faith. And on the other hand, blessed be God! there may be a real and an operative trust with a very imperfect or mistaken creed. The wild flowers on the rock bloom fair and bright, though they have scarcely any soil in which to strike their roots, and the plants in the most fertile garden may fail to produce flowers and seed. So trust and credence are not always of the same magnitude.

This trust is no arbitrary condition. The Israelite

was bid to turn to the brazen serpent. There was no connection between his look and his healing, except in so far as the symbol was a help to, and looking at it was a test of, his faith in the healing power of God. But it is no arbitrary appointment, as many people often think it is, which connects inseparably together the look of faith and the eternal life that Christ gives. For seeing that salvation is no mere external gift of shutting up some outward Hell and opening the door to some outward Heaven, but is a state of heart and mind, of relation to God, the only way by which that salvation can come into a man's heart is that he, knowing his need of it, shall trust Christ, and through Him the new life will flow into his heart. Faith is trust, and trust is the stretching out of the hand to take the precious gift, the opening of the heart for the influx of the grace, the eating of the bread, the drinking of the water, of life.

It is the only possible condition. God forbid that I should even seem to depreciate other forms of healing men's evils and redressing men's wrongs, and diminishing the sorrows of humanity! We welcome them all; but education, art, culture, refinement, improved environment, bettered social and political conditions, whilst they do a great deal, do not go down to the bottom of the necessity. And after you have built your colleges and art museums and stately pleasure-houses, and set every man in an environment that is suited to develop him, you will find out what surely the world might have found out already, that, as in some stately palace built in the Campagna, the malaria is in the air, and steals in at the windows, and infects all the inhabitants. Thank God for all these other things! but you cannot heal a man who has poison in

his veins by administering cosmetics, and you cannot put out Vesuvius with a jugful of water. If the camp is to be healed, the Christ must be lifted up.

III. And now, lastly, here we have the life that comes with a look at the lifted-up Son of Man.

Those of you who are using the Revised Version will see that there is a little change made here, partly by the exclusion of a clause and partly by changing the order of the words. The alteration is not only nearer the original text, but brings out a striking thought. It reads that 'whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life.' Now, it is far too late a period of my discourse to enlarge upon all that these great words would suggest to us, but let me just, in a sentence or two, mark the salient points.

'Eternal life'; do not bring that down to the narrow and inadequate conception of unending existence. It involves that, but it means a great deal more. It means a life of such a sort as is worth calling life, which is a life in union with God, and therefore full of blessedness, full of purity, full of satisfaction, full of desire and aspiration, and all these with the stamp of unendingness deeply impressed upon them. And that is what comes to us through the look. Not only is the process of dying arrested, but there is substituted for it a new process of growing possession of a new life. You 'must be born again,' Christ had been saying to Nicodemus. The change that passes upon a man when once he has anchored his trust on Jesus Christ, the uplifted Son of Man, is so profound that it is nothing else than a new birth, and a new life comes into his veins untainted by the poison, and with no proclivity to death.

'May have eternal life'—now, here, on the instant.

That eternal life is no future gift to be bestowed upon mortal men when they have passed through the agony of death, but it is a gift which comes to us here, and may come to any man on the instant of his looking to Jesus Christ.

‘May in Him have eternal life’—union with Christ by faith, that profound incorporation—if I may use the word—into Him, which the New Testament sets forth in all sorts of aspects as the very foundation of the blessings of Christianity; that union is the condition of eternal life. So, dear brethren, we all need that the poison shall be cast out of our veins. We all need that the tendency downwards to a condition which can only be described as death may be arrested, and the motion reversed. We all need that our knowledge shall be vitalised into faith. We all need that the past shall be forgiven, and the power of sin upon us in the present shall be cancelled. ‘The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,’ because it was shed for the remission of the sins of the many, and is transfused, an untainted principle of life, into our veins. What Jesus said to Nicodemus by night in that quiet chamber in Jerusalem, what He said in effect and act upon the Cross, when uplifted there, is what He says to each of us from the Throne where He is now lifted up: ‘Who-soever believeth shall in Me have eternal life.’ Take Him at His word, and you will find that it is true.

CHRIST'S MUSTS

‘ . . . Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.’—JOHN III. 14.

I HAVE chosen this text for the sake of one word in it, that solemn ‘must’ which was so often on our

Lord's lips. I have no purpose of dealing with the remainder of this clause, nor indeed with it at all, except as one instance of His use of the expression. But I have felt it might be interesting, and might set old truths in a brighter light, if we gather together the instances in which Christ speaks of the great necessity which dominated His life, and shaped even small acts.

The expression is most frequently used in reference to the Passion and Resurrection. There are many instances in the Gospels, in which He speaks of that *must*. The first of these is that of my text. Then there is another class, of which His word to His mother when a twelve-year-old child may be taken as a type: 'Wist ye not that I *must* be about My Father's business?' where the mysterious consciousness of a special relation to God in the child's heart drew Him to the Temple and to His Father's work. Other similar instances are those in which He responded to the multitude when they wanted to keep Him to themselves: 'I *must* preach in other cities also'; or as when He said, 'I *must* work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day.'

Yet another aspect of the same necessity is presented when, looking far beyond the earthly work and suffering, He discerned the future triumph which was to be the issue of these, and said, 'Other sheep I have . . . them also I *must* bring.'

And yet another is in reference to a very small matter: His selection of a place for a few hours' rest on His last fateful journey to Jerusalem, when He said, 'Zaccheus, . . . to-day I *must* abide at thy house.'

Now, if we put these instances together, we shall get some precious glimpses into our Lord's heart, and His view of life.

I. Here we see Christ recognising and accepting the necessity for His death.

My text, if we accept John's Gospel, contributes an altogether new element to our conception of our Lord as announcing His death. For the other three Gospels lay emphasis on it as being part of His teaching, especially during the later stage of His ministry. But it does not follow that He began to think about it or to see it, when He began to speak about it. There are reasons for the earlier comparative reticence, and there is no ground for the conclusion that then first began to dawn upon a disappointed enthusiast the grim reality that His work was not going to prosper, and that martyrdom was necessary. That is a notion that has been frequently upheld of late years, but to me it seems altogether incongruous with the facts of the case. And, if John's Gospel is a true record, that theory is shivered against this text, which represents Him at the very beginning of His career—the time when, according to that other theory, He was full of the usual buoyant and baseless anticipations of a reformer commencing His course—as telling Nicodemus, 'Even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up.' In like manner, in the previous chapter of this same Gospel, we have the significant though enigmatical utterance: 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up'; with the Evangelist's authoritative comment: 'He spake of the Temple of His body.' So, from the beginning of His career, the end was clear before Him.

And why *must* He go to the Cross? Not merely, as the other Evangelists put it, in order that 'it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the prophets.' It was not that Jesus *must* die because the prophets had said that Messiah should, but that the prophets had

said that Messiah should because Jesus must. There was a far deeper necessity than the fulfilment of any prophetic utterance, even the necessity which shaped that utterance. The work of Jesus Christ could not be done unless He died. He could not be the Saviour of the world unless He was the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

We cannot see all the grounds of that solemn imperative, but this we can see, that it was because of the requirements of the divine righteousness, and because of the necessities of sinful men. And so Christ's was no martyr's death, who had to die as the penalty of the faithful discharge of His duty. It was not the penalty that He paid for doing His work, but it was the work itself. Not that gracious life, nor 'the loveliness of perfect deeds,' nor His words of sweet wisdom, nor His acts of transcendent power, equalled only by the pity that moved the power, completed His task, but He 'came to give His life a ransom for many.'

'Must' is a hard word. It may express an unwelcome necessity. Was this necessity unwelcome? When He said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' was He shrinking, or reluctantly submitting? Ah, no! He *must* die because He *would* save, and He *would* save because He *did* love. His filial obedience to God coincided with His pity for men: and not merely in obedience to the requirements of the divine righteousness, but in compassion for the necessities of sinners, necessity was laid upon Him.

Oh, brethren! nothing held Christ to the Cross but His own desire to save us. Neither priests nor Romans carried Him thither. What fastened Him to it was not the nails driven by rude hands. And the reason

why He did not, as the taunters bade Him do, come down from it, was neither a physical nor a moral necessity unwelcome to Himself, but the yielding of His own will to do all which was needed for man's salvation.

This sacrifice was bound to the altar by the cords of love. We have heard of martyrs who have refused to be tied to the stake, and have kept themselves motionless in the centre of the fierce flames by the force of their wills. Jesus Christ fastened Himself to the Cross and died because He would.

And, oh! if we think of that sweet, serene life as having clear before it from the very first steps that grim end, how infinitely it gains in pathetic beauty and in heart-touchingness! What wonderful self-abnegation! How he was at leisure from Himself, with a heart of pity for every sorrow, and loins girt for all service, though during all His life the Cross closed the vista! Think that human shrinking was felt by Him, think that it was so held back that His purpose never faltered, think that each of us may say, 'He *must* die because He *would* save me'; and then ask, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?'

II. In a second class of these utterances, we see Christ impelled by filial obedience and the consciousness of His mission.

'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' That was a strange utterance for a boy of twelve. It seems to negative the supposition that what is called the 'Messianic consciousness' dawned upon Jesus Christ first after His baptism and the descent of the Spirit. But however that may be, it and the similar passages to which I have already referred, bearing upon His discharge of His work prior

to His death, teach that the necessity was an inward necessity springing from His consciousness of Sonship, and His recognition of the work that He had to do. And so He is our great Example of spontaneous obedience, which does violence to itself if it does not obey. It was instinct that sent the boy into the Temple. Where should a Son be but in His Father's house? How could He not be doing His Father's business?

Thus He stands before us, the pattern for the only obedience that is worth calling so, the obedience which would be pained and ill at ease unless it were doing the work of God. Religion is meant to make it a second nature, or, as I have ventured to call it, an instinct—a spontaneous, uncalculating, irrepressible desire—to be in fellowship with God, and to be doing His will. That is the meaning of our Christianity. There is no obedience in reluctant obedience; forced service is slavery, not service. Christianity is given for the specific purpose that it may bring us so into touch with Jesus Christ as that the mind which was in Him may be in us; and that we too may be able to say, with a kind of wonder that people should have expected to find us in any other place, or doing anything else, ‘Wist ye not that because I am a Son, *I* must be about my Father's business?’ As certainly as the sunflower follows the sun, so certainly will a man animated by the mind that was in Jesus Christ, like Him find his very life's breath in doing the Father's will.

So then, brethren, what about our grudging service? What about our reluctant obedience? What about the widespread mistake that religion prohibits wished-for things and enforces unwelcome duties? If my Christianity does not make me recoil from what it

forbids, and spring eagerly to what it commends, my Christianity is of very little use. If when in the Temple we are like idle boys in school, always casting glances at the clock and the door, and wishing ourselves outside, we may just as well be out as in. Glad obedience is true obedience. Only he who can say, 'Thy law is within my heart, and I do Thy will because I love Thee, and cannot but do as Thou desirest,' has found the joy possible to a Christian life. It is not 'harsh and crabbed,' as those that look upon it from the outside may 'suppose,' but musical and full of sweetness. There is nothing more blessed than when 'I choose' covers exactly the same ground as 'I ought.' And when duty is delight, delight will never become disgust, nor joy pass away.

III. We see, in yet another use of this great 'must,' Christ anticipating His future triumph.

'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.' Striking as these words are in themselves, they are still more striking when we notice their connection; for they follow immediately upon His utterance about laying down His life for the sheep. So, then, this was a work beyond the Cross, and whatever it was, it was to be done after He had died.

I need not point out to you how far afield Christ's vision goes out into the dim, waste places, where on the dark mountains the straying sheep are torn and frightened and starving. I need not dwell upon how far ahead in the future His glance travels, or how magnificent and how rebuking to our petty narrowness this great word is. 'There shall be one *flock*' (not fold); and they shall be one, not because they are

within the bounds of any visible 'fold,' but because they are gathered round the one Shepherd, and in their common relation to Him are knit together in unity.

But what sort of a Man is this who considers that His widest work is to be done by Him after He is dead? 'Them also I *must* bring.' Thou? how? when? Surely such words as these, side by side with a clear prevision of the death that was so soon to come, are either meaningless or the utterance of an arrogance bordering on insanity, or they anticipate what an Evangelist declares did take place—that the Lord was 'taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God,' whilst His servants 'went everywhere preaching the Word, the Lord also working with them and confirming the Word' with the signs He wrought.

'Them also I must bring.' That is not merely a necessity rooted in the nature of God and the wants of men. It is not merely a necessity springing from Christ's filial obedience and sense of a mission; but it is a 'must' of destiny, a 'must' which recognises the sure results of His passion; a 'must' which implies the power of the Cross to be the reconciliation of the world. And so for all pessimistic thoughts to-day, or at any time, and when Christian men's hearts may be trembling for the Ark of God—although, perhaps, there may be little reason for the tremor—and in the face of all blatant antagonisms and of proud Goliaths despising the 'foolishness of preaching,' we fall back upon Christ's great 'must.' It is written in the councils of Heaven more unchangeably than the heavens; it is guaranteed by the power of the Cross; it is certain, by the eternal life of the crucified Saviour, that He

will one day be the King of humanity, and *must* bring His wandering sheep to couch in peace, one flock round one Shepherd.

IV. Lastly, we have Christ applying the greatest principle to the smallest duty.

'Zaccheus! make haste and come down; to-day I *must* abide in thy house.' Why must He? Because Zaccheus was to be saved, and was worth saving. What was the 'must'? To stop for an hour or two on His road to the Cross. So He teaches us that in a life penetrated by the thought of the divine will, which we gladly obey, there are no things too great, and none too trivial, to be brought under the dominion of that law, and to be regulated by that divine necessity. Obedience is obedience, whether in large things or in small. There is no scale of magnitude applicable to the distinction between God's will and that which is not God's will. Gravitation rules the motes that dance in the sunshine as well as the mass of Jupiter. A triangle with its apex in the sun, and its base beyond the solar system, has the same properties and comes under the same laws as one that a schoolboy scrawls upon his slate. God's truth is not too great to rule the smallest duties. The star in the East was a guide to the humble house at Bethlehem, and there are starry truths high in the heavens that avail for our guidance in the smallest acts of life.

So, brethren, bring your doings under that all-embracing law of duty—duty, which is the heathen expression for the will of God. There are great regions of life in which lower necessities have play. Circumstances, our past, bias and temper, relationship, friendship, civic duty, and the like—all these bring their necessities; but let us think of them all as being,

what indeed they are, manifestations to us of the will of our Father. There are great tracts of life in which either of two courses may be right, and we are left to the decision of choice rather than of duty; but high above all these, let us see towering that divine necessity. It is a daily struggle to bring 'I will' to coincide with 'I ought'; and there is only one adequate and always powerful way of securing that coincidence, and that is to keep close to Jesus Christ and to drink in His spirit. Then, when duty and delight are conterminous, 'the rough places will be plain, and the crooked things straight, and every mountain shall be brought low, and every valley shall be exalted,' and life will be blessed, and service will be freedom. Joy and liberty and power and peace will fill our hearts when this is the law of our being: 'All that the Lord hath spoken, that *must* I do.'

THE LAKE AND THE RIVER

'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'—JOHN iii. 16.

I VENTURE to say that my text shows us a lake, a river, a pitcher, and a draught. 'God so loved the world'—that is the lake. A lake makes a river for itself—'God so loved the world that He gave His . . . Son.' But the river does not quench any one's thirst unless he has something to lift the water with: 'God so loved the world that He gave His . . . Son, that whosoever believeth on Him.' Last comes the draught: 'shall not perish, but have *everlasting life*.'

I. The great lake, God's love.

Before Jesus Christ came into this world no one

ever dreamt of saying 'God *loves*.' Some of the Old Testament psalmists had glimpses of that truth and came pretty near expressing it. But among all the 'gods many and lords many,' there were lustful gods and beautiful gods, and idle gods, and fighting gods and peaceful gods: but not one of whom worshippers said, 'He loves.' Once it was a new and almost incredible message, but we have grown accustomed to it, and it is not strange any more to us. But if we would try to think of what it means, the whole truth would flash up into fresh newness, and all the miseries and sorrows and perplexities of our lives would drift away down the wind, and we should be no more troubled with them. 'God loves' is the greatest thing that can be said by lips.

'God . . . loved the world.' Now when we speak of loving a number of individuals—the broader the stream, the shallower it is, is it not? The most intense patriot in England does not love her one ten-thousandth part as well as he loves his own little girl. When we think or feel anything about a great multitude of people, it is like looking at a forest. We do not see the trees, we see the whole wood. But that is not how God loves the world. Suppose I said that I loved the people in India, I should not mean by that that I had any feeling about any individual soul of all those dusky millions, but only that I massed them all together; or made what people call a generalisation of them. But that is not the way in which God loves. He loves all because He loves each. And when we say, 'God so loved the world,' we have to break up the mass into its atoms, and to think of each atom as being an object of His love. We all stand out in God's love just as we should do to one another's eyes, if we were on the top of a

mountain-ridge with a clear sunset sky behind us. Each little black dot of the long procession would be separately visible. And we all stand out like that, every man of us isolated, and getting as much of the love of God as if there was not another creature in the whole universe but God and ourselves. Have you ever realised that when we say, 'He loved the world,' that really means, as far as each of us is concerned, He loves *me*? And just as the whole beams of the sun come pouring down into every eye of the crowd that is looking up to it, so the whole love of God pours down, not upon a multitude, an abstraction, a community, but upon every single soul that makes up that community. He loves us all because He loves us each. We shall never get all the good of that thought until we translate it, and lay it upon our hearts. It is all very well to say, 'Ah yes! God is love,' and it is all very well to say He loves 'the world.' But I will tell you what is a great deal better—to say—what Paul said—'Who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.'

Now, there is one other suggestion that I would make to you before I go on, and that is that all through the New Testament, but especially in John's Gospel, 'the world' does not only mean men, but *sinful* men, men separated from God. And the great and blessed truth taught here is that, however I may drag myself away from God, I cannot drive Him away from me, and that however little I may care for Him, or love Him, or think about Him, it does not make one hairs-breadth of difference as to the fact that He loves me. I know, of course, that if a man does not love Him back again, God's love has to take shapes that it would not otherwise take, which may be extremely inconvenient for the man. But though the shape may alter,

must alter, the fact remains; and every sinful soul on the earth, including Judas Iscariot — who is said to head the list of crimes—has God's love resting upon him.

II. The river.

Now, to go back to my metaphor, the lake makes a river. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.'

So then, it was not Christ's death that turned God from hating and being angry, but it was God's love that appointed Christ's death. If you will only remember that, a great many of the shallow and popular objections to the great doctrine of the Atonement disappear at once. 'God so loved . . . that He gave.' But some people say that when we preach that Jesus Christ died for our sins, that God's wrath might not fall upon men, our teaching is immoral, because it means 'Christ came, and so God loved.' It is the other way about, friend. 'God so loved . . . that He gave.'

But now let me carry you back to the Old Testament. Do you remember the story of the father taking his boy who carried the bundle of wood and the fire, and tramping over the mountains till they reached the place where the sacrifice was to be offered? Do you remember the boy's question that brings tears quickly to the reader's eyes: 'Here is the wood, and here is the fire, where is the lamb'? Do you not think it would be hard for the father to steady his voice and say, 'My son, God will provide the lamb'? And do you remember the end of that story? 'The Angel of the Lord said unto Abraham, Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not *withheld* thy son, *thine only son*, from Me, therefore blessing I will bless thee,' etc. Remember that one of the Apostles said, using the

very same word that is used in Genesis as to Abraham's giving up his son to God, 'He *spared not* His own Son, but delivered Him up to the death for us all.' Does not that point to a mysterious parallel? Somehow or other—we have no right to attempt to say how—somehow or other, God not only *sent* His Son, as it is said in the next verse to my text, but far more tenderly, wonderfully, pathetically, God *gave*—gave up His Son, and the sacrifice was enhanced, because it was His only begotten Son.

Ah! dear brethren, do not let us be afraid of following out all that is included in that great word, 'God . . . *loved* the world.' For there is no love which does not delight in giving, and there is no love that does not delight in depriving itself, in some fashion, of what it gives. And I, for my part, believe that Paul's words are to be taken in all their blessed depth and wonderfulness of meaning when he says, 'He *gave up*'—as well as gave—'Him to the death for us all.'

And now, do you not think that we are able in some measure to estimate the greatness of that little word 'so'? 'God *so* loved'—so deeply, so holily, so perfectly—that He 'gave His only begotten Son'; and the gift of that Son is, as it were, the river by which the love of God comes to every soul in the world.

Now there are a great many people who would like to put the middle part of this great text of ours into a parenthesis. They say that we should bring the first words and the last words of this text together, and never mind all that lies between. People who do not like the doctrine of the Cross would say, 'God *so* loved the world that He gave . . . everlasting life'; and there an end. 'If there is a God, and if He loves the world, why cannot He save the world without more

ado? There is no need for these interposed clauses. God so loved the world that everybody will go to heaven'—that is the gospel of a great many of you; and it is the gospel of a great many wise and learned people. But it is not John's Gospel, and it is not Christ's Gospel. The beginning and the end of the text cannot be buckled up together in that rough-and-ready fashion. They have to be linked by a chain; and there are two links in the chain: God forges the one, and we have to forge the other. 'God so loved the world that He gave'—then He has done His work. 'That whosoever believeth'—that is your work. And it is in vain that God forges *His* link, unless you will forge *yours* and link it up to His. 'God so loved the world,' that is step number one in the process; 'that He gave,' that is step number two; and then there comes another 'that'—'that whosoever believeth,' that is step number three; and they are all needed before you come to number four, which is the landing-place and not a step—'should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

III. The pitcher.

I come to what I called the pitcher, with which we draw the water for our own use—'that whosoever believeth.' You perhaps say, 'Yes, I believe. I accept every word of the Gospel, I quite believe that Jesus Christ died, as a matter of history; and I quite believe that He died for men's sins.' And what then? Is that what Jesus Christ meant by believing? To believe *about* Him is not to believe *on* Him; and unless you believe *on* Him you will get no good out of Him. There is the lake, and the river must flow past the shanties in the clearing in the forest, if the men there are to drink. But it may flow past their doors, as

broad as the Mississippi, and as deep as the ocean; but they will perish with thirst, unless they dip in their hands, like Gideon's men, and carry the water to their own lips. Dear friend, what you have to do—and your soul's salvation, and your peace and joy and nobleness in this life and in the next depend absolutely upon it—is simply to trust in Jesus Christ and His death for your sins.

I sometimes wish we had never heard that word 'faith.' For as soon as we begin to talk about 'faith,' people begin to think that we are away up in some theological region far above everyday life. Suppose we try to bring it down a little nearer to our businesses and bosoms, and instead of using a word that is kept sacred for employment in religious matters, and saying 'faith,' we say 'trust.' That is what you give to your wives and husbands, is it not? And that is exactly what you have to give to Jesus Christ, simply to lay hold of Him as a man lays hold of the heart that loves him, and leans his whole weight upon it. Lean hard on Him, hang on Him, or, to take the other metaphor that is one of the Old Testament words for trust, 'flee for refuge' to Him. Fancy a man with the avenger of blood at his back, and the point of the pursuer's spear almost pricking his spine—don't you think he would make for the City of Refuge with some speed? That is what you have to do. He that believeth, and by trust lays hold of the Hand that holds him up, will never fall; and he that does not lay hold of that Hand will never stand, to say nothing of rising. And so by these two links God's love of the world is connected with the salvation of the world.

IV. The draught.

Finally, we have here the draught of living water.

Did you ever think why our text puts 'should not perish' first? Is it not because, unless we put our trust in Him, we shall certainly perish, and because, therefore, that certainty of perishing must be averted before we can have 'everlasting life'?

Now I am not going to enlarge on these two solemn expressions, 'perishing' and 'everlasting life.' I only say this: men do not need to wait until they die before they 'perish.' There are men and women here now who are dead—dead while they live, and when they come to die, the perishing, which is condemnation and ruin, will only be the making visible, in another condition of life, of what is the fact to-day. Dear brethren, you do not need to die in order to perish in your sins, and, blessed be God, you can have everlasting life before you die. You can have it now, and there is only one way to have it, and that is to lay hold of Him who is the Life. And when you have Jesus Christ in your heart, whom you will be sure to have if you trust Him, then you will have life—life eternal, here and now, and death will only make manifest the eternal life which you had while you were alive here, and will perfect it in fashions that we do not yet know anything about.

Only remember, as I have been trying to show you, the order that runs through this text. Remember the order of these last words, and that we must first of all be delivered from eternal and utter death, before we can be invested with the eternal and absolute life.

Now, dear brethren, I dare say I have never spoken to the great majority of you before; it is quite possible I may never speak to any of you again. I have asked God to help me to speak so as that souls should be drawn to the Saviour. And I beseech you now, as my

last word, that you would listen, not to me, but to Him. For it is He that says to us, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, that whosoever'—'whosoever,' a blank cheque, like the *M.* or *N.* of the Prayer-book, or the *A. B.* of a schedule; you can put your own name in it—'that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have'—here, now—'everlasting life.'

THE WEARIED CHRIST

'Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well. . . . He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.'—JOHN IV. 6, 32.

Two pictures result from these two verses, each striking in itself, and gaining additional emphasis by the contrast. It was during a long hot day's march that the tired band of pedestrians turned into the fertile valley. There, whilst the disciples went into the little hill-village to purchase, if they could, some food from the despised inhabitants, Jesus, apparently too exhausted to accompany them, 'sat *thus* on the well.' That little word *thus* seems to have a force difficult to reproduce in English. It is apparently intended to enhance the idea of utter weariness, either because the word 'wearied' is in thought to be supplied, 'sat, being thus wearied, on the well'; or because it conveys the notion which might be expressed by our 'just as He was'; as a tired man flings Himself down anywhere and anyhow, without any kind of preparation beforehand, and not much caring where it is that he rests.

Thus, utterly worn out, Jesus Christ sits on the well, whilst the western sun lengthens out the shadows on the plain. The disciples come back, and what a change

they find. Hunger gone, exhaustion ended, fresh vigour in their wearied Master. What had made the difference? The woman's repentance and joy. And He unveils the secret of His reinvigoration when He says, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of'—the hidden manna. 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'

Now, I think if we take just three points of view, we shall gain the lessons of this remarkable contrast. Note, then, the wearied Christ; the devoted Christ; the reinvigorated Christ.

I. The wearied Christ.

How precious it is to us that this Gospel, which has the loftiest things to say about the manifest divinity of our Lord, and the glory that dwelt in Him, is always careful to emphasise also the manifest limitations and weaknesses of the Manhood. John never forgets either term of his great sentence in which all the gospel is condensed, 'the Word became flesh.' Ever he shows us 'the Word'; ever 'the flesh.' Thus it is he only who records the saying on the Cross, 'I thirst.' It is he who tells us how Jesus Christ, not merely for the sake of getting a convenient opening of a conversation, or to conciliate prejudices, but because He needed what He asked, said to the woman of Samaria, 'Give Me to drink.' So the weariness of the Master stands forth for us as pathetic proof that it was no shadowy investiture with an apparent Manhood to which He stooped, but a real participation in our limitations and weaknesses, so that work to Him was fatigue, even though in Him dwelt the manifest glory of that divine nature which 'fainteth not, neither is weary.'

Not only does this pathetic incident teach us for our firmer faith, and more sympathetic and closer appre-

hension, the reality of the Manhood of Jesus Christ, but it supplies likewise some imperfect measure of His love, and reveals to us one condition of His power. Ah! if He had not Himself known weariness He never could have said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It was because Himself 'took our infirmities,' and amongst these the weakness of tired muscles and exhausted frame, that 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.' The Creator must have no share in the infirmities of the creature. It must be His unwearied power that calls them all by their names; and because He is great in might 'not one' of the creatures of His hand can 'fail.' But the Redeemer must participate in that from which He redeems; and the condition of His strength being 'made perfect in our weakness' is that our weakness shall have cast a shadow upon the glory of His strength. The measure of His love is seen in that, long before Calvary, He entered into the humiliation and sufferings and sorrows of humanity; a condition of His power is seen in that, forasmuch as the 'children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same,' not only that 'through death He might deliver' from death, but that in life He might redeem from the ills and sorrows of life.

Nor does that exhausted Figure, reclining on Jacob's Well, preach to us only what *He* was. It proclaims to us likewise what *we* should be. For if His work was carried on to the edge of His capacity, and if He shrank not from service because it involved toil, what about the professing followers of Jesus Christ, who think that they are exempted from any form of service because they can plead that it will weary them? What

about those who say that they tread in His footsteps, and have never known what it was to yield up one comfort, one moment of leisure, one thrill of enjoyment, or to encounter one sacrifice, one act of self-denial, one aching of weariness for the sake of the Lord who bore all for them? The wearied Christ proclaims His manhood, proclaims His divinity and His love, and rebukes us who consent to 'walk in the way of His commandments' only on condition that it can be done without dust or heat; and who are ready to run the race that is set before us, only if we can come to the goal without perspiration or turning a hair. 'Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.'

II. Still further, notice here the devoted Christ.

It is not often that He lets us have a glimpse into the innermost chambers of His heart, in so far as the impelling motives of His course are concerned. But here He lays them bare. 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'

Now, it is no mere piece of grammatical pedantry when I ask you to notice that the language of the original is so constructed as to give prominence to the idea that the aim of Christ's life was the doing of the Father's will; and that it is the aim rather than the actual performance and realisation of the aim which is pointed at by our Lord. The words would be literally rendered 'My meat is *that I may do* the will of Him that sent Me and finish His work'—that is to say, the very nourishment and refreshment of Christ was found in making the accomplishment of the Father's commandment His ever-impelling motive, His ever-pursued goal. The expression carries us into the inmost heart of Jesus, dealing, as it does, with the one

all-pervading motive rather than with the resulting actions, fair and holy as these were.

Brethren, the secret of our lives, if they are at all to be worthy and noble, must be the same—the recognition, not only as they say now, that we have a mission, but that there is a Sender; which is a wholly different view of our position, and that He who sends is the loving Father, who has spoken to us in that dear Son, who Himself made it His aim thus to obey, in order that it might be possible for us to re-echo His voice, and to repeat His aim. The recognition of the Sender, the absolute submission of our wills to His, must run through all the life. You may do your daily work, whatever it be, with this for its motto, ‘the will of the Lord be done’; and they who thus can look at their trade, or profession, and see the trivialities and monotonies of their daily occupations, in the transfiguring light of that great thought, will never need to complain that life is small, ignoble, wearisome, insignificant. As with pebbles in some clear brook with the sunshine on it, the water in which they are sunk glorifies and magnifies them. If you lift them out, they are but bits of dull stone; lying beneath the sunlit ripples they are jewels. Plunge the prose of your life, and all its trivialities, into that great stream, and it will magnify and glorify the smallest and the homeliest. Absolute submission to the divine will, and the ever-present thrilling consciousness of doing it, were the secret of Christ’s life, and ought to be the secret of ours.

Note the distinction between doing the will and perfecting the work. That implies that Jesus Christ, like us, reached forward, in each successive act of obedience to the successive manifestations of the Father’s will, to something still undone. The work

will never be perfected or finished except on condition of continual fulfilment, moment by moment, of the separate behests of that divine will. For the Lord, as for His servants, this was the manner of obedience, that He 'pressed towards the mark,' and by individual acts of conformity secured that at last the whole 'work' should have been so completely accomplished that He might be able to say upon the Cross, 'It is finished.' If we have any right to call ourselves His, we too have thus to live.

III. Lastly, notice the reinvigorated Christ.

I have already pointed out the lovely contrast between the two pictures, the beginning and the end of this incident; so I need not dwell upon that. The disciples wondered when they found that Christ desired and needed none of the homely sustenance that they had brought to Him. And when He answered their sympathy rather than their curiosity—for they did not ask Him any questions, but they said to Him, 'Master, eat'—with 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of,' they, in their blind, blundering fashion, could only imagine that some one had brought Him something. So they gave occasion for the great words upon which we have been touching.

Notice, however, that Christ here sets forth the lofty aim at conformity to the divine will and fulfilment of the divine work as being the meat of the soul. It is the true food for us all. The spirit which feeds upon such food will grow and be nourished. And the soul which feeds upon its own will and fancies, and not upon the plain brown bread of obedience, which is wholesome, though it be often bitter, will feed upon ashes, which will grate upon the teeth and hurt the palate. Such a soul will be like those wretched

infants that are discovered sometimes at 'baby-farms,' starved and stunted, and not grown to half their right size. If you would have your spirits strong, robust, well nourished, live by obedience, and let the will of God be the food of your souls, and all will be well.

Souls thus fed can do without a good deal that others need. Why, enthusiasm for anything lifts a man above physical necessities and lower desires, even in its poorest forms. A regiment of soldiers making a forced march, or an athlete trying to break the record, will tramp, tramp on, not needing food, or rest, or sleep, until they have achieved their purpose, poor and ignoble though it may be. In all regions of life, enthusiasm and lofty aims make the soul lord of the body and of the world.

And in the Christian life we shall be thus lords, exactly in proportion to the depth and earnestness of our desires to do the will of God. They who thus are fed can afford 'to scorn delights and live laborious days.' They who thus are fed can afford to do with plain living, if there be high impulses as well as high thinking. And sure I am that nothing is more certain to stamp out the enthusiasm of obedience which ought to mark the Christian life than the luxurious fashion of living which is getting so common to-day amongst professing Christians.

It is not in vain that we read the old story about the Jewish boys whose faces were radiant and whose flesh was firmer when they were fed on pulse and water than on all the wine and dainties of the Babylonish court. 'Set a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite,' and let us remember that the less we use, and the less we feel that we need, of outward

goods, the nearer do we approach to the condition in which holy desires and lofty aims will visit our spirits.

I commend to you, brethren, the story of our text, in its most literal application, as well as in the loftier spiritual lessons that may be drawn from it. To be near Christ, and to desire to live for Him, delivers us from dependence upon earthly things; and in those who thus do live the old word shall be fulfilled, ‘Better is a little that a righteous man hath, than the abundance of many wicked.’

‘GIVE ME TO DRINK’

‘. . . Jesus saith unto her, Give Me to drink. . . . Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He.’—JOHN iv. 7, 26.

THIS Evangelist very significantly sets side by side our Lord’s conversations with Nicodemus and with the woman of Samaria. The persons are very different: the one a learned Rabbi of reputation, influence, and large theological knowledge of the then fashionable kind; the other an alien woman, poor—for she had to do this menial task of water-drawing in the heat of the day—and of questionable character.

The diversity of persons necessitates great differences in the form of our Lord’s address to each; but the resemblances are as striking as the divergencies. In both we have His method of gradually unveiling the truth to a susceptible soul, beginning with symbol and a hint, gradually enlarging the hint and translating the symbol; and finally unveiling Himself as the Giver and the Gift. There is another resemblance; in both the characteristic gift is that of the Spirit of Life, and, perhaps, in both the symbol is the same.

For we read in one of 'water and the Spirit'; and in the other of the fountain within, springing into everlasting life. However that may be, the process of teaching is all but identical in substance in both cases, though in form so various.

The words of our Lord which I have taken for our text now are His first and last utterance in this conversation. What a gulf lies between! They are linked together by the intervening sayings, and constitute with these a great ladder, of which the foot is fast on earth, and the top fixed in heaven. On the one hand, He owns the lowest necessities; on the other, He makes the highest claims. Let us ponder on this remarkable juxtaposition, and try to gather the lessons that are plain in it.

I. First, then, I think we see here the mystery of the dependent Christ.

'Give Me to drink': 'I am He.' Try to see the thing for a moment with the woman's eyes. She comes down from her little village, up amongst the cliffs on the hillside, across the narrow, hot valley, beneath the sweltering sunshine reflected from the bounding mountains, and she finds, in the midst of the lush vegetation round the ancient well, a solitary, weary Jew, travel-worn, evidently exhausted—for His disciples had gone away to buy food, and He was too wearied to go with them—looking into the well, but having no dipper or vessel by which to get any of its cool treasure. We lose a great deal of the meaning of Christ's request if we suppose that it was merely a way of getting into conversation with the woman, a 'breaking of the ice.' It was a great deal more than that. It was the utterance of a felt and painful necessity, which He Himself could not supply without

a breach of what He conceived to be His filial dependence. He could have brought water out of the well. He did not need to depend upon the pitcher that the disciples had perhaps unthinkingly carried away with them when they went to buy bread. He did not need to ask the woman to give, but He chose to do so. We lose much if we do not see in this incident far more than the woman saw, but we lose still more if we do not see what she did see. And the words which the Master spoke to her are no mere way of introducing a conversation on religious themes; but He asked for a draught which He needed, and which He had no other way of getting.

So, then, here stands, pathetically set forth before us, our Lord's true participation in two of the distinguishing characteristics of our weak humanity—subjection to physical necessities and dependence on kindly help. We find Him weary, hungry, thirsty, sometimes slumbering. And all these instances are documents and proofs for us that He was a true man like ourselves, and that, like ourselves, He depended on ‘the woman that ministered to Him’ for the supply of His necessities, and so knew the limitations of our social and else helpless humanity.

But then a wearied and thirsty man is nothing of much importance. But here is a Man who *humbled Himself* to be weary and to thirst. The keynote of this Gospel, the one thought which unlocks all its treasures, and to the elucidation of which, in all its aspects, the whole book is devoted, is, ‘The Word was made flesh.’ Only when you let in the light of the last utterance of our text, ‘I that speak unto thee am He,’ do we understand the pathos, the sublimity, the depth and blessedness of meaning which lie in

the first one, 'Give Me to drink.' When we see that He bowed Himself, and willingly stretched out His hands for the fetters, we come to understand the significance of these traces of His manhood. The woman says, with wonder, 'How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me?' and that was wonderful. But, as He hints to her, if she had known more clearly who this Person was, that seemed to be a Jew, a deeper wonder would have crept over her spirit. The wonder is that the Eternal Word should need the water of the well, and should ask it of a poor human creature.

And why this humiliation? He could, as I have said, have wrought a miracle. He that fed five thousand, He that had turned water into wine at the rustic marriage-feast, would have had no difficulty in quenching His thirst if he had chosen to use His miraculous power therefor. But He here shows us that the true filial spirit will rather die than cast off its dependence on the Father, and the same motive which led Him to reject the temptation in the wilderness, and to answer with sublime confidence, 'Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God,' forbids Him here to use other means of securing the draught that He so needed than the appeal to the sympathy of an alien, and the swift compassion of a woman's heart.

And then, let us remember that the motive of this willing acceptance of the limitations and weaknesses of humanity is, in the deepest analysis, simply His love to us; as the mediæval hymn has it, 'Seeking me, Thou satest weary.'

In that lonely Traveller, worn, exhausted, thirsty, craving for a draught of water from a stranger's hand,

is set forth 'the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth.' A strange manifestation of divine glory this! But if we understand that the glory of God is the lustrous light of His self-revealing love, perhaps we shall understand how, from that faint, craving voice, 'Give Me to drink,' that glory sounds forth more than in the thunders that rolled about the rocky peak of Sinai. Strange to think, brethren, that the voice from those lips dry with thirst, which was low and weak, was the voice that spoke to the sea, 'Peace! be still,' and there was a calm; that said to demons, 'Come out of him!' and they evacuated their fortress; that cast its command into the grave of Lazarus, and he came forth; and which one day all that are in the grave shall hear, and hearing shall obey. 'Give Me to drink.' 'I that speak unto thee am He.'

II. Secondly, we may note here the self-revealing Christ.

The process by which Jesus gradually unveils His full character to this woman, so unspiritual and unsusceptible as she appeared at first sight to be, is interesting and instructive. It would occupy too much of your time for me to do more than set it before you in the barest outline. Noting the singular divergence between the two sayings which I have taken as our text, it is interesting to notice how the one gradually merges into the other. First of all, Jesus Christ, as it were, opens a finger of His hand to let the woman have a glimpse of the gift lying there, that that may kindle desire, and hints at some occult depth in His person and nature all undreamed of by her yet, and which would be the occasion of greater wonder, and of a reversal of their parts, if she knew it. Then, in answer to her, half understanding that He meant

more than met the ear, and yet opposing the plain physical difficulties that were in the way, in that He had 'nothing to draw with, and the well is deep,' and asking whether He were greater than our father Jacob, who also had given, and given not only a draught, but the well, our Lord enlarges her vision of the blessedness of the gift, though He says but little more of its nature, except in so far as that may be gathered from the fact that the water that He will give will be a permanent source of satisfaction, forbidding the pangs of unquenched desire ever again to be felt as pangs; and from the other fact that it will be an inward possession, leaping up with a fountain's energy, and a life within itself, towards, and into everlasting life. Next, he strongly assails conscience and demands repentance, and reveals Himself as the reader of the secrets of the heart. Then He discloses the great truths of spiritual worship. And, finally, as a prince in disguise might do, He flings aside the mantle of which He had let a fold or two be blown back in the previous conversation, and stands confessed. 'I that speak unto thee am He.' That is to say, the kindling of desire, the proffer of the all-satisfying gift, the quickening of conscience, the revelation of a Father to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and the final full disclosure of His person and office as the Giver of the gift which shall slake all the thirsts of men—these are the stages of His self-revelation.

Then note, not only the process, but the substance of the revelation of Himself. The woman had a far more spiritual and lofty conception of the office of Messiah than the Jews had. It is not the first time that neretics have reached a loftier ideal of some parts of the truth than the orthodox attain. To the Jew

the Messiah was a conquering king, who would help them to ride on the necks of their enemies, and pay back their persecutions and oppressions. To this Samaritan woman—speaking, I suppose, the conceptions of her race—the Messiah was One who was to *'tell us all things.'*

Jesus Christ accepts the position, endorses her anticipations, and in effect presents Himself before her and before us as the Fountain of all certitude and knowledge in regard to spiritual matters. For all that we can know, or need to know, with regard to God and man and their mutual relations; for all that we can or need know in regard to manhood, its ideal, its obligations, its possibilities, its destinies; for all that we need to know of men in their relation to one another, we have to turn to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who *'will tell us all things.'* He is the Fountain of light; He is the Foundation of certitude; and they who seek, not hypotheses and possibilities and conjectures and dreams, but the solid substance of a reliable knowledge, must grasp Him, and esteem the words of His mouth and the deeds of His life more than their necessary food.

He meets this woman's conceptions as He had met those of Nicodemus. To him He had unveiled Himself as the Son of God, and the Son of Man who came down from heaven, and is in heaven, and ascends to heaven. To the woman He reveals Himself as the Messiah, who will tell us all truth, and to both as the Giver of the gift which shall communicate and sustain and refresh the better life. But I cannot help dwelling for a moment upon the remarkable, beautiful, and significant designation which our Lord employs here. *'I that speak unto thee.'* The word in the original, trans

lated by our version 'speak,' is even more sweet, because more familiar, and conveys the idea of unrestrained frank intercourse. Perhaps we might render 'I who am talking with Thee!' and that our Lord desired to emphasise to the woman's heart the notion of His familiar intercourse with her, Messiah though He were, seems to me confirmed by the fact that He uses the same expression, with additional grace and tenderness about it, when He says, with such depth of meaning, to the blind man whom He had healed, 'Thou hast both seen Him,' with the eyes to which He gave sight and object of sight, 'and it is He that *talketh* with thee.' The familiar Christ who will come and speak to us face to face and heart to heart, 'as a man speaketh with his friend,' is the Christ who will tell us all things, and whom we may wholly trust.

Note too how this revelation has for its condition the docile acceptance of the earlier and imperfect teachings. If the woman had not yielded herself to our Lord's earlier words, and, though with very dim insight, yet with a heart that sought to be taught, followed Him as He stepped from round to round of the ascending ladder, she had never stood on the top and seen this great vision. If you see nothing more in Jesus Christ than a man like yourself, compassed with our infirmities, and yet sweet and gracious and good and pure, be true to what you know, and put it into practice, and be ready to accept all the light that dawns. They that begin down at the bottom with hearing 'Give me to drink,' may stand at the top, and hear Him speak to them His unveiled truth and His full glory. 'To him that hath shall be given.' 'If any man wills to do His will he shall know of the teaching.'

III. Lastly, we have here the universal Christ.

The woman wondered that, being a Jew, He spoke to her. As I have said, our Lord's first utterance is simply the expression of a real physical necessity. But it is none the less what the woman felt it to be, a strange overleaping of barriers that towered very high. A Samaritan, a woman, a sinner, is the recipient of the first clear confession from Jesus Christ of His Messiahship and dignity. She was right in her instinct that something lay behind His sweeping aside of the barriers and coming so close to her with His request. These two, the prejudices of race and the contempt for woman, two of the crying evils of the old world, were overpassed by our Lord as if He never saw them. They were too high for men's puny limbs; they made no obstacle to the march of His divine compassion. And therein lies a symbol, if you like, but none the less a prophecy that will be fulfilled, of the universal adaptation and destination of the Gospel, and its independence of all distinctions of race and sex, condition, moral character. In Jesus Christ 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, neither bond nor free'; ye 'are all one in Christ.' If He had been but a Jew, it was wonderful that He should talk to a Samaritan. But there is nothing in the character and life of Christ, as recorded in Scripture, more remarkable and more plain than the entire absence of any racial peculiarities, or of characteristics owing to His position in space or time. So unlike His nation was He that the very *élite* of His nation snarled at Him and said, 'Thou art a Samaritan!' So unlike them was He that one feels that a character so palpitatingly human to its core, and so impossible to explain from its surroundings, is inexplicable, but on the New

Testament theory that He is not a Jew, or man only, but the Son of Man, the divine embodiment of the ideal of humanity, whose dwelling was on earth, but His origin and home in the bosom of God. Therefore Jesus Christ is the world's Christ, your Christ, my Christ, every man's Christ, the Tree of Life that stands in the midst of the garden, that all men may draw near to it and gather of its fruit.

Brother, answer His proffer of the gift as this woman did: 'Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not; neither go all the way to the world's broken cisterns to draw'; and He will put into your hearts that indwelling fountain of life, so that you may say like this woman's townspeople: 'Now I have heard Him myself, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE GIFT AND THE GIVER

'Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.'—JOHN iv. 10.

THIS Gospel has two characteristics seldom found together: deep thought and vivid character-drawing. Nothing can be more clear-cut and dramatic than the scene in the chapter before us. There is not a word of description of this Samaritan woman. She paints herself, and it is not a beautiful picture. She is apparently of the peasant class, from a little village nestling on the hill above the plain, come down in the broiling sunshine to Jacob's well. She is of mature age, and has had a not altogether reputable past. She is frivolous, ready to talk with strangers, with a tongue quick to turn grave things into jests; and yet she

possesses, hidden beneath masses of unclean vanities, a conscience and a yearning for something better than she has, which Christ's words awoke, and which was finally so enkindled as to make her fit to receive the full declaration of His Messiahship, which Pharisees and priests could not be trusted with.

I need scarcely do more than remind you of the way in which the conversation between this strangely assorted pair began. The solitary Jew, sitting spent with travel on the well, asks for a draught of water; not in order to get an opening for preaching, but because He needs it. She replies with an exclamation of light wonder, half a jest and half a sarcasm, and challenging a response in the same tone.

But Christ lifts her to a higher level by the words of my text, which awed levity, and prepared for a fuller revelation. 'Thou dost wonder that I, being a Jew, ask drink of thee, a Samaritan. If thou knewest who I am, thy wonder at My asking would be more. If thou knewest what I have to give, we should change places, and thou wouldest ask, and I should bestow.'

So then, we have here gift, Giver, way of getting, and ignorance that hinders asking. Let us look at these.

I. First, the gift of God. Now it is quite clear that our Lord means the same thing, whatever it may be, by the two expressions, the 'gift of God' and the 'living water.' For, unless He does, the whole sequence of my text falls to pieces. 'Living water' was suggested, no doubt, by the circumstances of the moment. There, in the well, was an ever-springing source, and, says He, a like supply, ever welling up for thirsty lips and foul hands, ever sweet and ever sufficient, God is ready to give.

We may remember how, all through Scripture, we hear the tinkle of these waters as they run. The force of the expression is to be gathered largely from the Old Testament and the uses of the metaphor there. It has been supposed that by the 'living water' which God gives is here meant some one specific gift, such as that of the Holy Spirit, which sometimes is expressed by the metaphor. Rather I should be disposed to say the 'living water' is eternal life. 'With Thee is the fountain of life.' And so, in the last resort, the gift of God is God Himself. Nothing else will suffice for us, brethren. We need Him, and we need none but Him.

Our Lord, in the subsequent part of this conversation, again touches upon this great metaphor, and suggests one or two characteristics, blessings, and excellences of it. 'It shall be *in him*,' it is something that we may carry about with us in our hearts, inseparable from our being, free from all possibility of being lured away by violence, being rent from us by sorrows, or even being parted from us by death. What a man has outside of him he only seems to have. Our only real possessions are those which have passed into the substance of our souls. All else we shall leave behind. The only good is inward good; and this water of life slakes our thirst because it flows into the deepest place of our being, and abides there for ever.

Oh! you that are seeking your satisfaction from fountains that remain outside of you after all your efforts, learn that all of them, by reason of their externality, will sooner or later be 'broken cisterns that can hold no water.' And I beseech you, if you want rest for your souls and stilling for their yearnings, look for it there, where only it can be found, in Him, who not only dwells in the heavens to rule

and to shower down blessings, but enters into the waiting heart and abides there, the inward, and therefore the only real, possession and riches. 'It shall be in him a fountain of water.'

It is 'springing up'—with an immortal energy, with ever fresh fulness, by its own inherent power, needing no pumps nor machinery, but ever welling forth its refreshment, an emblem of the joyous energy and continual freshness of vitality, which is granted to those who carry God in their hearts, and therefore can never be depressed beyond measure, nor ever feel that the burden of life is too heavy to bear, or its sorrows too sharp to endure.

It springs up 'into eternal life,' for water must seek its source, and rise to the level of its origin, and this fountain within a man, that reaches up ever towards the eternal life from which it came, and which it gives to its possessor, will bear him up, as some strong spring will lift the clods that choked its mouth, will bear him up towards the eternal life which is native to it, and therefore native to him.

Brethren, no man is so poor, so low, so narrow in capacity, so limited in heart and head, but that he needs a whole God to make him restful. Nothing else will. To seek for satisfaction elsewhere is like sailors who in their desperation, when the water-tanks are empty, slake their thirst with the treacherous blue that washes cruelly along the battered sides of their ship. A moment's alleviation is followed by the recurrence, in tenfold intensity, of the pangs of thirst, and by madness, and death. Do not drink the salt water that flashes and rolls by your side when you can have recourse to the fountain of life that is with God.

'Oh!' you say, 'commonplace, threadbare pulpit

rhetoric.' Yes! Do you live as if it were true? It will never be too threadbare to be dinned into your ears until it has passed into your lives and regulated them.

II. Now, in the next place, notice the Giver.

Jesus Christ blends in one sentence, startling in its boldness, the gift of God, and Himself as the Bestower. This Man, exhausted for want of a draught of water, speaks with parched lips a claim most singularly in contrast with the request which He had just made: 'I will give thee the living water.' No wonder that the woman was bewildered, and could only say, 'The well is deep, and Thou hast nothing to draw with.' She might have said, 'Why then dost Thou ask me?' The words were meant to create astonishment, in order that the astonishment might awaken interest, which would lead to the capacity for further illumination. Suppose you had been there, had seen the Man whom she saw, had heard the two things that she heard, and knew no more about Him than she knew, what would *you* have thought of Him and His words? Perhaps you would have been more contemptuous than she was. See to it that, since you know so much that explains and warrants them, you do not treat them worse than she did.

Jesus Christ claims to give God's gifts. He is able to give to that poor, frivolous, impure-hearted and impure-lived woman, at her request, the eternal life which shall still all the thirst of her soul, that had often in the past been satiated and disgusted, but had never been satisfied by any of its draughts.

And He claims that in this giving He is something more than a channel, because, says He, 'If thou hadst asked of Me I would give thee.' We sometimes think

of the relation between God and Christ as being typified by that of some land-locked sea amidst remote mountains, and the affluent that brings its sparkling treasures to the thirsting valley. But Jesus Christ is no mere vehicle for the conveyance of a divine gift, but His own heart, His own power, His own love are in it; and it is His gift just as much as it is God's.

Now I do not do more than pause for one moment to ask you to think of what inference is necessarily involved in such a claim as this. If we know anything about Jesus Christ at all, we know that He spoke in this tone, not occasionally, but habitually. It will not do to pick out other bits of His character or actions and admire these and ignore *the* characteristic of His teachings—His claims for Himself. And I have only this one word to say, if Jesus Christ ever said anything the least like the words of my text, and if they were not true, what was He but a fanatic who had lost His head in the fancy of His inspiration? And if He said these words and they *were* true, what is He then? What but that which this Gospel insists from its beginning to its end that He was—the Eternal Word of God, by whom all divine revelation from the beginning has been made, and who at last ‘became flesh’ that we might ‘receive of His fulness,’ and therein ‘be filled with all the fulness of God.’ Other alternative I, for my part, see none.

But I would have you notice, too, the connection between these human needs of the Saviour and His power to give the divine gift. Why did He not simply say to this woman, ‘If thou knewest who I am?’ Why did He use this periphrasis of my text, ‘Who it is that saith unto thee, “Give Me to drink”’? Why but because He wanted to fix her attention on the startling

contradiction between His appearance and His claims —on the one hand asserting divine prerogative, on the other forcing into prominence human weakness and necessity, because these two things, the human weakness and the divine prerogative, are inseparably braided together and intertwined. Some of you will remember the great scene in Shakespeare where the weakness of Cæsar is urged as a reason for rejecting his imperial authority:—

‘Ay! and that tongue of his, that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas! it cried, “Give me some drink, . . .
Like a sick girl.”’

And the inference that is drawn is, how can he be fit to be a ruler of men? But we listen to our Cæsar and Emperor, when He asks this woman for water, and when He says on the Cross, ‘I thirst,’ and we feel that these are not the least of His titles to be crowned with many crowns. They bring Him nearer to us, and they are the means by which His love reaches its end, of bestowing upon us all, if we will have it, the cup of salvation. Unless He had said the one of these two things, He never could have said the other. Unless the dry lips had petitioned, ‘Give Me to drink,’ the gracious lips could never have said, ‘I will give thee living water.’ Unless, like Jacob of old, this Shepherd could say, ‘In the day the drought consumed Me,’ it would have been impossible that the flock ‘shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, . . . for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water.’

III. Again, notice how to get the gift.

Christ puts together, as if they were all but contem-

poraneous, 'thou wouldst have asked of Me,' and 'I would have given thee.' The hand on the telegraph transmits the message, and back, swift as the lightning, flashes the response. The condition, the only condition, and the indispensable condition, of possessing that water of life—the summary expression for all the gifts of God in Jesus Christ, which at the last are essentially God Himself—is the desire to possess it turned to Jesus Christ. Is it not strange that men should not desire; is it not strange and sad that such foolish creatures are we that we do not want what we need; that our wishes and needs are often diametrically opposite? All men desire happiness, but some of us have so vitiated our tastes and our palates by fiery intoxicants that the water of life seems dreadfully tasteless and unstimulating, and so we will rather go back again to the delusive, poisoned drinks than glue our lips to the river of God's pleasures.

But it is not enough that there should be the desire. It must be turned to Him. In fact the asking of my text, so far as you and I are concerned, is but another way of speaking the great keyword of personal religion, faith in Jesus Christ. For they who ask, know their necessity, are convinced of the power of Him to whom they appeal to grant their requests, and rely upon His love to do so. And these three things, the sense of need, the conviction of Christ's ability to save and to satisfy, and of His infinite love that desires to make us blessed—these three things fused together make the faith which receives the gift of God.

Remember, brethren, that another of the scriptural expressions for the act of trusting in Him, is *taking*, not asking. You do not need to ask, as if for something that is not provided. What we all need to do is

to open our eyes to see what is there, if we like to put out our hands and take it. Why should we be saying, 'Give me to drink,' when a pierced hand reaches out to us the cup of salvation, and says, 'Drink ye all of it'? 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come . . . and drink . . . without money and without price.'

There is no other condition but desire turned to Christ, and that is the necessary condition. God cannot give men salvation, as veterinary surgeons drench unwilling horses—forcing the medicine down their throats through clenched teeth. There must be the opened mouth, and wherever there is, there will be the full supply. 'Ask, and ye shall receive'; take, and ye shall possess.

IV. Lastly, mark the ignorance that prevents asking.

Jesus Christ looked at this poor woman and discerned in her, though, as I said, it was hidden beneath mountains of folly and sin, a thirsty soul that was dimly longing for something better. And He believed that, if once the mystery of His being and the mercy of God's gifts were displayed before her, she would melt into a yearning of desire that is certain to be fulfilled. In some measure the same thing is true of us all. For surely, surely, if only you saw realities, and things as they are, some of you would not be content to continue as you are—without this water of life. Blind, blind, blind, are the men who grope at noon-day as in the dark and turn away from Jesus. If you knew, not with the head only, but with the whole nature, if you knew the thirst of your soul, the sweetness of the water, the readiness of the Giver, and the dry and parched land to which you condemn yourselves by your refusal, surely you would bethink yourself and fall at His feet and ask, and get, the water of life.

But, brethren, there is a worse case than ignorance; there is the case of people that know and refuse, not by reason of imperfect knowledge, but by reason of averted will. And I beseech you to ponder whether that may not be your condition. 'Whosoever *will*, let him come.' 'Ye *will* not come unto Me that ye might have life.' I do not think I venture much when I say that I am sure there are people hearing me now, not Christians, who are as certain, deep down in their hearts, that the only rest of the soul is in God, and the only way to get it is through Christ, as any saint of God's ever was. But the knowledge does not touch their will because they like the poison and they do not want the life.

Oh! dear friends, the instantaneousness of Christ's answer, and the certainty of it, are as true for each of us as they were for this woman. The offer is made to us all, just as it was to her. We can gather round that Rock like the Israelites in the wilderness, and slake every thirst of our souls from its outgushing streams. Jesus Christ says to each of us, as He did to her, tenderly, warningly, invitingly, and yet rebukingly, 'If thou knewest . . . thou wouldst ask, . . . and I would give.'

Take care lest, by continual neglect, you force Him at last to change His words, and to lament over you, as He did over the city that He loved so well, and yet destroyed. 'If thou *hadst* known in thy day the things that belong to thy peace. But now they are hid from thine eyes.'

THE SPRINGING FOUNTAIN

'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.'—JOHN IV. 14.

THERE are two kinds of wells, one a simple reservoir, another containing the waters of a spring. It is the latter kind which is spoken about here, as is clear not only from the meaning of the word in the Greek, but also from the description of it as 'springing up.' That suggests at once the activity of a fountain. A fountain is the emblem of motion, not of rest. Its motion is derived from itself, not imparted to it from without. Its 'silvery column' rises ever heavenward, though gravitation is too strong for it, and drags it back again.

So Christ promises to this ignorant, sinful Samaritan woman that if she chose He would plant in her soul a gift which would thus well up, by its own inherent energy, and fill her spirit with music, and refreshment, and satisfaction.

What is that gift? The answer may be put in various ways which really all come to one. It is Himself, the unspeakable Gift, His own greatest gift; or it is the Spirit 'which they that believe on Him should receive,' and whereby He comes and dwells in men's hearts; or it is the resulting life, kindred with the life bestowed, a consequence of the indwelling Christ and the present Spirit.

And so the promise is that they who believe in Him and rest upon His love shall receive into their spirits a new life principle which shall rise in their hearts like a fountain, 'springing up into everlasting life.'

I think we shall best get the whole depth and magnitude of this great promise if, throwing aside all mere artificial order, we simply take the words as they stand

here in the text, and think, first, of Christ's gift as a fountain within; then as a fountain springing, leaping up, by its own power; and then as a fountain 'springing into everlasting life.'

I. First, Christ's gift is represented here as a fountain within.

Most men draw their supplies from without; they are rich, happy, strong, only when externals minister to them strength, happiness, riches. For the most of us, what we have is that which determines our felicity.

Take the lowest type of life, for instance, the men of whom the majority, alas! I suppose, in every time is composed, who live altogether on the low plane of the world, and for the world alone, whether their worldliness take the form of sensuous appetite, or of desire to acquire wealth and outward possessions. The thirst of the body is the type of the experience of all such people. It is satisfied and slaked for a moment, and then back comes the tyrannous appetite again. And, alas! the things that you drink to satisfy the thirst of your souls are too often like a publican's adulterated beer, which has got salt in it, and chemicals, and all sorts of things to stir up, instead of slaking and quenching, the thirst. So 'he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.' The appetite grows by what it feeds on, and a little lust yielded to to-day is a bigger one to-morrow, and half a glass to-day grows to a bottle in a twelvemonth. As the old classical saying has it, he 'who begins by carrying a calf, before long is able to carry an ox'; so the thirst in the soul needs and drinks down a constantly increasing draught.

And even if we rise up into a higher region and look at the experience of the men who have in some

measure learned that 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth,' nor in the abundance of the gratification that his animal nature gets, but that there must be an inward spring of satisfaction, if there is to be any satisfaction at all; if we take men who live for thought, and truth, and mental culture, and yield themselves up to the enthusiasm for some great cause, and are proud of saying, 'My mind to me a kingdom is,' though they present a far higher style of life than the former, yet even that higher type of man has so many of his roots in the external world that he is at the mercy of chances and changes, and he, too, has deep in his heart a thirst that nothing, no truth, no wisdom, no culture, nothing that addresses itself to one part of his nature, though it be the noblest and the loftiest, can ever satisfy and slake.

I am sure I have some such people in my audience, and to them this message comes. You may have, if you will, in your own hearts, a springing fountain of delight and of blessedness which will secure that no unsatisfied desires shall ever torment you. Christ in His fulness, His Spirit, the life that flows from both and is planted within our hearts, these are offered to us all; and if we have them we carry inclosed within ourselves all that is essential to our felicity; and we can say, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be self-satisfying,' not with the proud, stoical independence of a man who does not want either God or man to make him blessed, but with the humble independence of a man who can say 'my sufficiency is of God.'

No independence of externals is possible, nor wholesome if it were possible, except that which comes from absolute dependence on Jesus Christ.

If you have Christ in your heart then life is possible, peace is possible, joy is possible, under all circumstances and in all places. Everything which the soul can desire, it possesses. You will be like the garrison of a beleaguered castle, in the courtyard of which is a sparkling spring, fed from some source high up in the mountains, and finding its way in there by underground channels which no besiegers can ever touch. Sorrows will come, and make you sad, but though there may be much darkness round about you, there will be light in the darkness. The trees may be bare and leafless, but the sap has gone down to the roots. The world may be all wintry and white with snow, but there will be a bright little fire burning on your own hearthstone. You will carry within yourselves all the essentials to blessedness. If you have 'Christ in the vessel' you can smile at the storm. They that drink from earth's fountains 'shall thirst again'; but they who have Christ in their hearts will have a fountain within which will not freeze in the bitterest cold, nor fail in the fiercest heat. 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain.'

II. Christ's gift is a springing fountain.

The emblem, of course, suggests motion by its own inherent impulse. Water may be stagnant, or it may yield to the force of gravity and slide down a descending river-bed, or it may be pumped up and lifted by external force applied to it, or it may roll as it does in the sea, drawn by the moon, driven by the winds, borne along by currents that owe their origin to outward heat or cold. But a fountain rises by an energy implanted within itself, and is the very emblem of joyous, free, self-dependent and self-regulated activity.

And so, says Christ, 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a springing fountain'; it shall not lie there stagnant, but leap like a living thing, up into the sunshine, and flash there, turned into diamonds, when the bright rays smile upon it.

So here is the promise of two things: the promise of activity, and of an activity which is its own law.

The promise of activity. There seems small blessing, in this overworked world, in a promise of more active exertion; but what an immense part of our nature lies dormant and torpid if we are not Christians! How much of the work that is done is dreary, wearisome, collar-work, against the grain. Do not the wheels of life often go slowly? Are you not often weary of the inexpressible monotony and fatigue? And do you not go to your work sometimes, though with a fierce feeling of 'need-to-do-it,' yet also with inward repugnance? And are there not great parts of your nature that have never woke into activity at all, and are ill at ease, because there is no field of action provided for them? The mind is like millstones; if you do not put the wheat into them to grind, they will grind each other's faces. So some of us are fretting ourselves to pieces, or are sick of a vague disease, and are morbid and miserable because the highest and noblest parts of our nature have never been brought into exercise. Surely this promise of Christ's should come as a true Gospel to such, offering, as it does, if we will trust ourselves to Him, a springing fountain of activity in our hearts that shall fill our whole being with joyous energy, and make it a delight to live and to work. It will bring to us new powers, new motives; it will set all the wheels of life going at double speed. We shall be quickened by the presence of that mighty power, even as a dim

taper is brightened and flames up when plunged into a jar of oxygen. And life will be delightful in its hardest toil, when it is toil for the sake of, and by the indwelling strength of, that great Lord and Master of our work.

And there is not only a promise of activity here, but of activity which is its own law and impulse. That is a blessed promise in two ways. In the first place, law will be changed into delight. We shall not be driven by a commandment standing over us with whip and lash, or coming behind us with spur and goad, but that which we ought to do we shall rejoice to do; and inclination and duty will coincide in all our lives when our life is Christ's life in us.

That should be a blessing to some of you who have been fighting against evil and trying to do right with more or less success, more or less interruptedly and at intervals, and have felt the effort to be a burden and a wearisomeness. Here is a promise of emancipation from all that constraint and yoke of bondage which duty discerned and unloved ever lays upon a man's shoulders. When we carry within us the gift of a life drawn from Jesus Christ, and are able to say like Him, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, and Thy law is within my heart,' only then shall we have peace and joy in our lives. 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death.'

And then, in the second place, that same thought of an activity which is its own impulse and its own law, suggests another aspect of this blessedness, namely, that it sets us free from the tyranny of external circumstances which absolutely shape the lives of so many of us. The lives of all must be to a large extent moulded by these, but they need not, and should not,

be completely determined by them. It is a miserable thing to see men and women driven before the wind like thistledown. Circumstances must influence us, but they may either influence us to base compliance and passive reception of their stamp, or to brave resistance and sturdy nonconformity to their solicitations. So used, they will influence us to a firmer possession of the good which is most opposite to them, and we shall be the more unlike our surroundings, the more they abound in evil. You can make your choice whether, if I may so say, you shall be like balloons that are at the mercy of the gale and can only shape their course according as it comes upon them and blows them along, or like steamers that have an inward power that enables them to keep their course from whatever point the wind blows, or like some sharply built sailing-ship that, with a strong hand at the helm, and canvas rightly set, can sail almost in the teeth of the wind and compel it to bear her along in all but the opposite direction to that in which it would carry her if she lay like a log on the water.

I beseech you all, and especially you young people, not to let the world take and shape you, like a bit of soft clay put into a brick-mould, but to lay a masterful hand upon it, and compel it to help you, by God's grace, to be nobler, and truer, and purer.

It is a shame for men to live the lives that so many amongst us live, as completely at the mercy of externals to determine the direction of their lives as the long weeds in a stream that yield to the flow of the current. It is of no use to preach high and brave maxims, telling men to assert their lordship over externals, unless we can tell them how to find the inward power that will enable them to do so. But we

can preach such noble exhortations to some purpose when we can point to the great gift which Christ is ready to give, and exhort them to open their hearts to receive that indwelling power which shall make them free from the dominion of these tyrant circumstances and emancipate them into the 'liberty of the sons of God.' 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a leaping fountain.'

III. The last point here is that Christ's gift is a fountain 'springing up into everlasting life.'

The water of a fountain rises by its own impulse, but howsoever its silver column may climb it always falls back into its marble basin. But this fountain rises higher, and at each successive jet higher, tending towards, and finally touching, its goal, which is at the same time its course. The water seeks its own level, and the fountain climbs until it reaches Him from whom it comes, and the eternal life in which He lives. We might put that thought in two ways. First, the gift is eternal in its duration. The water with which the world quenches its thirst perishes. All supplies and resources dry up like winter torrents in summer heat. All created good is but for a time. As for some, it perishes in the use; as for other, it evaporates and passes away, or is 'as water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up'; as for all, we have to leave it behind when we go hence. But this gift springs into everlasting life, and when we go it goes with us. The Christian character is identical in both worlds, and however the forms and details of pursuits may vary, the essential principle remains one. So that the life of a Christian man on earth and his life in heaven are but one stream, as it were, which may, indeed, like some of those American rivers, run for a

time through a deep, dark cañon, or in an underground passage, but comes out at the further end into broader, brighter plains and summer lands; where it flows with a quieter current and with the sunshine reflected on its untroubled surface, into the calm ocean. He has one gift and one life for earth and heaven—Christ and His Spirit, and the life that is consequent upon both.

And then the other side of this great thought is that the gift tends to, is directed towards, or aims at and reaches, everlasting life. The whole of the Christian experience on earth is a prophecy and an anticipation of heaven. The whole of the Christian experience of earth evidently aims towards that as its goal, and is interpreted by that as its end. What a contrast that is to the low and transient aims which so many of us have! The lives of many men go creeping along the surface when they might spring heavenwards. My friend! which is it to be with you? Is your life to be like one of those Northern Asiatic rivers that loses itself in the sands, or that flows into, or is sluggishly lost in, a bog; or is it going to tumble over a great precipice, and fall sounding away down into the blackness; or is it going to leap up 'into everlasting life'? Which of the two aims is the wiser, is the nobler, is the better?

And a life that thus springs will reach what it springs towards. A fountain rises and falls, for the law of gravity takes it down; this fountain rises and reaches, for the law of pressure takes it up, and the water rises to the level of its source. Christ's gift mocks no man, it sets in motion no hopes that it does not fulfil; it stimulates to no work that it does not crown with success. If you desire a life that reaches its goal, a life

in which all your desires are satisfied, a life that is full of joyous energy, that of a free man emancipated from circumstances and from the tyranny of unwelcome law, and victorious over externals, open your hearts to the gift that Christ offers you; the gift of Himself, of His death and passion, of His sacrifice and atonement, of His indwelling and sanctifying Spirit.

He offered all the fulness of that grace to this Samaritan woman, in her ignorance, in her profligacy, in her flippancy. He offers it to you. His offer awoke an echo in her heart, will it kindle any response in yours? Oh! when He says to you, 'The water that I shall give will be in you a fountain springing into everlasting life,' I pray you to answer as she did—'Sir!—Lord!—give me this water, that I thirst not; neither come to earth's broken cisterns to draw.'

THE SECOND MIRACLE

'This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judæa into Galilee.'—JOHN iv. 54.

THE Evangelist evidently intends us to connect together the two miracles in Cana. His object may, possibly, be mainly chronological, and to mark the epochs in our Lord's ministry. But we cannot fail to see how remarkably these two miracles are contrasted. The one takes place at a wedding, a homely scene of rural festivity and gladness. But life has deeper things in it than gladness, and a Saviour who preferred the house of feasting to the house of mourning would be no Saviour for us. The second miracle, then, turns to

the darker side of human experience. The happiest home has its saddened hours; the truest marriage joy has associated with it many a care and many an anxiety. Therefore, He who began by breathing blessing over wedded joy goes on to answer the piteous pleading of parental anxiety. It was fitting that the first miracle should deal with gladness, for that is God's purpose for His creatures, and that the second should deal with sicknesses and sorrows, which are additions to that purpose made needful by sin.

Again, the first miracle was wrought without intercession, as the outcome of Christ's own determination that His hour for working it was come. The second miracle was drawn from Him by the imperfect faith and the agonising pleading of the father.

But the great peculiarity of this second miracle in Cana is that it is moulded throughout so as to develop and perfect a weak faith. Notice how there are three words in the narrative, each of which indicates a stage in the history. 'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not *believe*.' . . . 'The man *believed* the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.' . . . 'Himself *believed* and his whole house.'

We have here, then, Christ manifested as the Discerner, the Rebuker, the Answerer, and therefore the Strengtheners, of a very insufficient and ignorant faith. It is a lovely example of the truth of that ancient prophecy, 'He will not quench the smoking flax.' So these three stages, as it seems to me, are the three points to observe. We have, first of all, Christ lamenting over an imperfect faith. Then we have Him testing, and so strengthening, a growing faith. And then we have the absent Christ rewarding and crowning a tested faith. I think if we look at these three stages

in the story we shall get the main points which the Evangelist intends us to observe.

I. First, then, we have here our Lord lamenting over an ignorant and sensuous faith.

At first sight His words, in response to the hurried, eager appeal of the father, seem to be strangely unfeeling, far away from the matter in hand. Think of how breathlessly, feeling that not an instant is to be lost, the poor man casts himself at the Master's feet, and pleads that his boy is 'at the point of death.' And just think how, like a dash of cold water upon this hot impatience, must have come these strange words that seem to overleap his case altogether, and to be gazing beyond him—'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.' 'What has that to do with me and my dying boy, and my impatient agony of petition?' 'It has everything to do with you.'

It is the revelation, first of all, of Christ's singular calmness and majestic leisure, which befitted Him who needed not to hurry, because He was conscious of absolute power. As when the pleading message was sent to Him: 'He whom Thou lovest is sick, He abode still two days in the same place where He was'; because He loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary; and just as when Jairus is hurrying Him to the bed where his child lies dead, He pauses on the way to attend to the petition of another sufferer; so, in like calmness of majestic leisure, He here puts aside the apparently pressing and urgent necessity in order to deal with a far deeper, more pressing one.

For in the words there is not only a revelation of our Lord's majestic leisure, but there is also an indication of what He thought of most importance in His dealing with men. It was worthy of His care to heal

the boy; it was far more needful that He should train and lead the father to faith. The one can wait much better than the other.

And there is in the words, too, something like a sigh of profound sorrow. Christ is not so much rebuking as lamenting. It is His own pained heart that speaks; He sees in the man before Him more than the man's words indicated; reading his heart with that divine omniscience which pierces beyond the surface, and beholding in him the very same evil which affected all his countrymen. So He speaks to him as one of a class, and thus somewhat softens the rebuke even while the answer to the nobleman's petition seems thereby to become still less direct, and His own sorrowful gaze at the wide-reaching spirit of blindness seems thereby to become more absorbed and less conscious of the individual sufferer kneeling at His feet.

Christ had just come from Samaria, the scorn of the Jews, and there He had found people who needed no miracles, whose conception of the Messiah was not that of a mere wonder-worker, but of one who will 'tell us all things,' and who believed on Him not because of the portents which He wrought, but because they heard Him themselves, and His words touched their consciences and stirred strange longings in their hearts. On the other hand, this Evangelist has carefully pointed out in the preceding chapters how such recognition as Christ had thus far received 'in His own country' had been entirely owing to His miracles, and had been therefore regarded by Christ Himself as quite unreliable (chap. ii. 23-25), while even Nicodemus, the Pharisee, had seen no better reason for regarding Him as a divinely sent Teacher than 'these miracles that Thou doest.' And now here He is no sooner

across the border again than the same spirit meets Him. He hears it even in the pleading, tearful tones of the father's voice, and that so clearly that it is for a moment more prominent even to His pity than the agony and the prayer. And over that Christ sorrows. Why? Because, to their own impoverishing, the nobleman and his fellows were blind to all the beauty of His character. The graciousness of His nature was nothing to them. They had no eyes for His tenderness and no ears for His wisdom; but if some vulgar sign had been wrought before them, then they would have run after Him with their worthless faith. And that struck a painful chord in Christ's heart when He thought of how all the lavishing of His love, all the grace and truth which shone radiant and lambent in His life, fell upon blind eyes, incapable of beholding His beauty; and of how the manifest revelation of a Godlike character had no power to do what could be done by a mere outward wonder.

This is not to disparage the 'miraculous evidence.' It is only to put in its proper place the spirit, which was blind to the self-attesting glory of His character, which beheld it and did not recognise it as 'the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father.'

That very same blindness to the divine which is in Jesus Christ, because material things alone occupy the heart and appeal to the mind, is still the disease of humanity. It still drives a knife into the loving heart of the pitying and helpful Christ. The special form which it takes in such a story as this before us is long since gone. The sense-bound people of this generation do not ask for signs. Miracles are rather a hindrance than a help to the reception of Christianity in many quarters. People are more willing to admire, after

a fashion, the beauty of Christ's character, and the exalted purity of His teaching (meaning thereby, generally, the parts of it which are not exclusively His), than to accept His miracles. So far round has the turn in the wheel gone in these days.

But although the form is entirely different the spirit still remains. Are there not plenty of us to whom sense is the only certitude? We think that the only knowledge is the knowledge that comes to us from that which we can see and touch and handle, and the inferences that we may draw from these; and to many all that world of thought and beauty, all those divine manifestations of tenderness and grace, are but mist and cloudland. Intellectually, though in a somewhat modified sense, this generation has to take the rebuke: 'Except ye see, ye will not believe.'

And practically do not the great mass of men regard the material world as all-important, and work done or progress achieved there as alone deserving the name of 'work' or 'progress,' while all the glories of a loving Christ are dim and unreal to their sense-bound eyes? Is it not true to-day, as it was in the old time, that if a man would come among you, and bring you material good, that would be the prophet for you? True wisdom, beauty, elevating thoughts, divine revelations; all these go over your heads. But when a man comes and multiplies loaves, then you say, 'This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world.' 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.'

And on the other side, is it not sadly true about those of us who have the purest and the loftiest faith, that we feel often as if it was very hard, almost impossible, to keep firm our grasp of One who never

is manifested to our sense? Do we not often feel, O that I could for once, for once only, hear a voice that would speak to my outward ear, or see some movement of a divine hand'? The loftiest faith still leans towards, and has an hankering after, some external and visible manifestation, and we need to subject ourselves to the illuminating rebuke of the Master who says, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe,' and, therefore, your faith that craves the support of some outward thing, and often painfully feels that it is feeble without it, is as yet but very imperfect and rudimentary.

II. And so we have here, as the next stage of the narrative, our Lord testing, and thus strengthening, a growing faith.

The nobleman's answer to our Lord's strange words sounds, at first sight, as if these had passed over him, producing no effect at all. 'Sir, come down ere my child die'; it is almost as if he had said, 'Do not talk to me about these things at present. Come and heal my boy. That is what I want; and we will speak of other matters some other time.' But it is not exactly that. Clearly enough, at all events, he did not read in Christ's words a reluctance to yield to his request, still less a refusal of it. Clearly he did not misunderstand the sad rebuke which they conveyed, else he would not have ventured to reiterate his petition. He does not pretend to anything more than he has, he does not seek to disclaim the condemnation that Christ brings against him, nor to assume that he has a loftier degree or a purer kind of faith than he possesses. He holds fast by so much of Christ's character as he can apprehend; and that is the beginning of all progress. What he knows he knows. He has sore

need; that is something. He has come to the Helper; that is more. He is only groping after Him, but he will not say a word beyond what he knows and feels; and, therefore, there is something in him to work upon; and faith is already beginning to bud and blossom. And so his prayer is his best answer to Christ's word: 'Sir, come down ere my child die.'

Ah! dear brethren, any true man who has ever truly gone to Christ with a sense even of some outward and temporal need, and has ever really prayed at all, has often to pass through this experience, that the first result of his agonising cry shall be only the revelation to him of the unworthiness and imperfection of his own faith, and that there shall seem to be strange delay in the coming of the blessing so longed for. And the true attitude for a man to take when there is unveiled before him, in his consciousness, in answer to his cry for help, the startling revelation of his own unworthiness and imperfection—the true answer to such dealing is simply to reiterate the cry. And then the Master bends to the petition, and because He sees that the second prayer has in it less of sensuousness than the first, and that some little germ of a higher faith is beginning to open, He yields, and yet He does not yield. 'Sir, come down ere my child die.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Go thy way, thy son liveth.'

Why did He not go with the suppliant? Why, in the act of granting, does He refuse? For the suppliant's sake. The whole force and beauty of the story come out yet more vividly if we take the contrast between it and the other narrative, which presents some points of similarity with it—that of the healing of the centurion's servant at Capernaum. There the centurion prays that Christ would but speak, and Christ says, 'I will

come.' There the centurion does not feel that His presence is necessary, but that His word is enough. Here the nobleman says 'Come,' because it has never entered his mind that Christ can do anything unless He stands like a doctor by the boy's bed. And he says, too, 'Come, *ere my child die*,' because it has never entered his mind that Christ can do anything if his boy has once passed the dark threshold.

And because his faith is thus feeble, Christ refuses its request, because He knows that so to refuse is to strengthen. Asked but to 'speak' by a strong faith, He rewards it by more than it prays, and offers to 'come.' Asked to 'come' by a weak faith, He rewards it by less, which yet is more, than it had requested; and refuses to come, that He may heal at a distance; and thus manifests still more wondrously His power and His grace.

His gentle and wise treatment is telling; and he who was so sense-bound that 'unless he saw signs and wonders he would not believe,' turns and goes away, bearing the blessing, as he trusts, in his hands, while yet there is no sign whatever that he has received it.

Think of what a change had passed upon that man in the few moments of his contact with Christ. When he ran to His feet, all hot and breathless and impatient, with his eager plea, he sought only for the deliverance of his boy, and sought it at the moment, and cared for nothing else. When he goes away from Him, a little while afterwards, he has risen to this height, that he believes the bare word, and turns his back upon the Healer, and sets his face to Capernaum in the confidence that he possesses the unseen gift. So has his faith grown.

And that is what you and I have to do. We have

Christ's bare word, and no more, to trust to for everything. We must be content to go out of the presence-chamber of the King with only His promise, and to cleave to that. A feeble faith requires the support of something sensuous and visible, as some poor trailing plant needs a prop round which it may twist its tendrils. A stronger faith strides away from the Master, happy and peaceful in its assured possession of a blessing for which it has nothing to rely upon but a simple bare word. That is the faith that we have to exercise. Christ has spoken. That was enough for this man, who from the babyhood of Christian experience sprang at once to its maturity. Is it enough for you? Are you content to say, 'Thy word, Thy naked word, is all that I need, for Thou hast spoken, and Thou wilt do it'?

'Go thy way; thy son liveth.' What a test! Suppose the father had not gone his way, would his son have lived? No! The son's life and the father's reception from Christ of what he asked were suspended upon that one moment. Will he trust Him, or will he not? Will he linger, or will he depart? He departs, and in the act of trusting he gets the blessing, and his boy is saved.

And look how the narrative hints to us of the perfect confidence of the father now. Cana was only a few miles from Capernaum. The road from the little city upon the hill down to where the waters of the lake flashed in the sunshine by the quays of Capernaum was only a matter of a few hours; but it was the next day, and well on into the next day, before he met the servants that came to him with the news of his boy's recovery. So sure was he that his petition was answered that he did not hurry to return home, but

leisurely and quietly went onwards the next day to his child. Think of the difference between the breathless rush up to Cana, and the quiet return from it. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.'

III. And so, lastly, we have here the absent Christ crowning and rewarding the faith which has been tested.

We have the picture of the father's return. The servants meet him. Their message, which they deliver before he has time to speak, is singularly a verbal repetition of the promise of the Master, 'Thy son liveth.' His faith, though it be strong, has not yet reached to the whole height of the blessing, for he inquires 'at what hour he began to *amend*,' expecting some slow and gradual recovery; and he is told 'that at the seventh hour,' the hour when the Master spoke, 'the fever left him,' and all at once and completely was he cured. So, more than his faith had expected is given to him; and Christ, when he lays His hand upon a man, does His work thoroughly, though not always at once.

Why was the miracle wrought in that strange fashion? Why did our Lord fling out His power as from a distance rather than go and stand at the boy's bedside? We have already seen the reason in the peculiar condition of the father's mind; but now notice what it was that he had learned by such a method of healing, not only the fact of Christ's healing power, but also the fact that the bare utterance of His will, whether He were present or absent, had power. And so a loftier conception of Christ would begin to dawn on him.

And for us that working of Christ at a distance is prophetic. It represents to us His action to-day. Still

He answers our cries that He would come down to our help by sending forth from the city on the hills, the city of the wedding feast, His healing power to descend upon the sick-beds and the sorrows and the sins that afflict the villages beneath. 'He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth, His word runneth very swiftly.'

This new experience enlarged and confirmed the man's faith. The second stage to which he had been led by Christ's treatment was simply belief in our Lord's specific promise, an immense advance on his first position of belief which needed sight as its basis.

But he had not yet come to the full belief of, and reliance upon, that Healer recognised as Messiah. But the experience which he now has had, though it be an experience based upon miracle, is the parent of a faith which is not merely the child of wonder, nor the result of beholding an outward sign. And so we read:—'So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth. And himself believed and his whole house.'

A partial faith brings experience which confirms and enlarges faith; and they who dimly apprehend Him, and yet humbly love Him, and imperfectly trust Him, will receive into their bosoms such large gifts of His love and gracious Spirit that their faith will be strengthened, and they will grow into the full stature of peaceful confidence.

The way to increase faith is to exercise faith. And the true parent of perfect faith is the experience of the blessings that come from the crudest, rudest, narrowest, blindest, feeblest faith that a man can exercise. Trust Him as you can, do not be afraid of inadequate conceptions, or of a feeble grasp. Trust

Him as you can, and He will give you so much more than you expected that you will trust Him more, and be able to say: 'Now I believe, because I have heard Him myself, and know that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE THIRD MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.'—JOHN v. 8.

THIS third of the miracles recorded in John's Gospel finds a place there, as it would appear, for two reasons: first, because it marks the beginning of the angry unbelief on the part of the Jewish rulers, the development of which it is one part of the purpose of this Gospel to trace; second, because it is the occasion for that great utterance of our Lord about His Sonship and His divine working as the Father also works, which occupies the whole of the rest of the chapter, and is the foundation of much which follows in the Gospel. It is for these reasons, and not for the mere sake of adding another story of a miraculous cure to the many which the other Evangelists have given us, that John narrates for us this history.

If, then, we consider the reason for the introduction of the miracle into the Gospel, we may be saved from the necessity of dwelling, except very lightly, upon some of the preliminary details which preceded the actual cure. It does not matter much to us for our present purpose which Feast it was on which Jesus went up to Jerusalem, nor whether the pool was by the sheep-market or by the sheep-gate, nor where-

abouts in Jerusalem Bethesda might happen to be. It may be of importance for us to notice that the mention of the angel who appears in the fourth verse is not a part of the original narrative. The true text only tells us of an intermittent pool which possessed, or was supposed to possess, curative energy; and round which the kindness of some forgotten benefactor had built five rude porches. There lay a crowd of wasted forms, and pale, sorrowful faces, with all varieties of pain and emaciation and impotence marked upon them, who yet were gathered in Bethesda, which being interpreted means 'a house of mercy.' It is the type of a world full of men suffering various sicknesses, but all sick; the type of a world that gathers with an eagerness, not far removed from despair, round anything that seems to promise, however vaguely, to help and to heal; the type of a world, blessed be God, which, amidst all its sad variety of woe and weariness, yet sits in the porches of 'a house of mercy,' and has in the midst a 'fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,' whose energy is as mighty for the last comer of all the generations as for the first that stepped into its cleansing flood.

This poor man, sick and impotent for eight and thirty years—many of which he had spent, as it would appear, day by day, wearily dragging his paralysed limbs to the fountain with daily diminishing hope—this poor man attracts the regard of Christ when He enters, and He puts to him the strange question, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' Surely there was no need to ask that; but no doubt the many disappointments and the long years of waiting and of suffering had stamped apathy upon the sufferer's face, and Christ saw that the first thing that was needed, in order that His

healing power might have a point of contact in the man's nature, was to kindle some little flicker of hope in him once more.

And so, no doubt, with a smile on His face, which converted the question into an offer, He says: 'Wilt thou be made whole?' meaning thereby to say, 'I will heal thee if thou wilt.' And there comes the weary answer, as if the man had said: 'Will I be made whole? What have I been lying here all these years for? I have nobody to put me into the pool.'

Yes, it is a hopeful prospect to hold out to a man whose disease is inability to walk, that if he will walk to the water he will get cured, and be able to walk afterwards. Why, he could not even roll himself into the pond, and so there he had lain, a type of the hopeless efforts at self-healing which we sick men put forth, a type of the tantalising gospels which the world preaches to its subjects when it says to a paralysed man: 'Walk that you may be healed; keep the commandments that you may enter into life.'

And so we have come at last to the main point of the narrative before us, and I fix upon these words, the actual words in which the cure was conveyed, as communicating to us some very important lessons and thoughts about Christ and our relation to Him.

I. First, I see in them Christ manifesting Himself as the Giver of power to the powerless who trust Him.

His words may seem at first hearing to partake of the very same almost cruel irony as the condition of cure which had already proved hopelessly impracticable. He, too, says, 'Walk that you may be cured'; and He says it to a paralysed and impotent man. But the two things are very different, for before this cripple could attempt to drag his impotent limbs into

an upright position, and take up the little light couch and sling it over his shoulders, he must have had some kind of trust in the person that told him to do so. A very ignorant trust, no doubt, it was; but all that was set before him about Jesus Christ he grasped and rested upon. He only knew Him as a Healer, and he trusted Him as such. The contents of a man's faith have nothing to do with the reality of his faith; and he that, having only had the healing power of Christ revealed to him, lays hold of that Healer, cleaves to Him with as genuine a faith as the man who has the whole fulness and sublimity of Christ's divine and human character and redeeming work laid out before him, and who cleaves to these. The hand that grasps is one, whatsoever be the thing that it grasps.

So it is no spiritualising of this story, or reading into it a deeper and more religious meaning than belongs to it, to say that what passed in that man's heart and mind before he caught up his little bed and walked away with it, was essentially the same action of mind and heart by which a sinful man, who knows that Christ is his Redeemer, grasps His Cross and trusts his soul to Him. In the one case, as in the other, there is confidence in the person; only in the one case the person was only known as a Healer, and in the other the person is known as a Saviour. But the faith is the same whatever it apprehends.

Christ comes and says to him, 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk.' There is a movement of confidence in the man's heart; he tries to obey, and in the act of obedience the power comes to him.

Ah, brother! it is always so. All Christ's commandments are gifts. When He says to you, 'Do this!' He pledges Himself to give you power to do it. Whatso-

ever He enjoins He strengthens for. He binds Himself, by His commandments, and every word of His lips which says to us 'Thou shalt!' contains as its kernel a word of His which says 'I will.' So when He commands, He bestows; and we get the power to keep His commandments when in humble faith we make the effort to do His will. It is only when we try to obey for the love's sake of Him that has healed us that we are able to obey. And be sure of this, whensoever we attempt to do what we know to be the Master's will, because He has given Himself for us, our power will be equal to our desire, and enough for our duty. As St. Augustine says: 'Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt.'

'Rise, take up thy bed and walk,' or as in another case, 'Stretch forth thy hand.' 'And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored whole as the other.' Christ gives power to keep His commandments to the impotent who try to obey, because they have been healed by Him.

II. In the next place, we have in this miracle our Lord set forth as the absolute Master, because He is the Healer.

The Pharisees and their friends had no eyes for the miracle; but if they found a man carrying his light couch on the Sabbath day, that was a thing that excited their interest, and must be seen to immediately.

And so, paying no attention to the fact that it was a paralysed man who was doing this, with the true narrow instinct of the formalist, they lay hold only of the fact of the broken Rabbinical restrictions, and try to stop him with these. 'It is the Sabbath day! It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.'

And they get an answer which goes a great deal

deeper than the speaker knew, and puts the whole subject of Christian obedience on its right footing. 'He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.' As if he had said: 'He gave me the power, had He not a right to tell me what to do with it? It was His gift that I could lift my bed; was I not bound to walk when and where He that had made me able to walk at all chose to bid me?'

And if you generalise that it just comes to this: the only person that has a right to command you is the Christ who saves you. He has the absolute authority to do as He will with your restored spiritual powers, because He has bestowed them all upon you. His dominion is built upon His benefits. He is the King because He is the Saviour. He rules because He has redeemed. He begins with giving, and it is only afterwards that He commands; and He turns to each of us with that smile upon His lips, and with tenderness in His voice which will bind any man, who is not an ingrate, to Him for ever. 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.'

There is always something hard and distasteful to the individual will in the tone of authority assumed by any man whatsoever. We always more or less rebel and shrink from that; and there is only one thing that makes commandment sweet, and that is when it drops like honey from the honeycomb, from lips that we love. So does it in the case of Christ's commands to us. It is joy to know and to do the will of One to whom the whole heart turns with gratitude and affection. And Christ blesses and privileges us by the communication to us of His pleasure concerning us, that we may have the gladness of yielding to

His desires, and so meeting the love which commands with the happy love which obeys. 'He that made me whole, the same said unto me . . .' and what He says it must be joy to do.

So, 'My yoke is easy and My burden is light,' not because Christ diminishes the requirements of law; not because the standard of Christian obedience is lowered beneath any other standard of conduct and character. It is far higher. The things which make Christian duty are often very painful in themselves. There is always self-sacrifice in Christian virtue, and self-sacrifice has always a sting in it; but the 'yoke is easy and the burden is light,' because, if I may so say, the yoke is padded with the softest velvet of love, and lies upon our necks lightly because He has laid it there. All the rigid harshness of precept is done away when the precept comes from Christ's lips, and His commandment 'makes the crooked things straight and the rough places plain'; and turns duty, distasteful duty, into joyful service. The blessed basis of Christian obedience, and of Christ's authority, is Christ's redemption.

III. And then, still further, we have here our Lord setting Himself forth as the divine Son, whose working needs and knows no rest.

We find, in the subsequent part of the chapter, that 'the Jews,' as they are called, by which is meant the antagonistic portion of the nation, sought to slay Christ 'because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.' But Jesus answered them, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' Unquestionably the form which the healing took was intended by our Lord to bring into prominence the very point which these pedantic casuists laid hold of. He meant to draw

attention to His sweeping aside of the Rabbinical casuistries of the law of the Sabbath. And He meant to do it in order that He might have the occasion of making this mighty claim, which is lodged in these solemn and profound words, to possess a Sonship, which, like the divine working, wrought, needing and knowing no repose.

‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.’ The rest, which the old story in Genesis attributed to the Creator after the Creation, was not to be construed as if it meant the rest of inactivity; but it was the rest of continuous action. God’s rest and God’s work are one. Throughout all the ages preservation is a continuous creation. The divine energy is streaming out for evermore, as the bush that burns unconsumed, as the sun that flames undiminished for ever, pouring out from the depth of that divine nature, and for ever sustaining a universe. So that there is no Sabbath, in the sense of a cessation from action, proper to the divine nature; because all His action is repose, and ‘e’en in His very motion there is rest.’ And this divine coincidence of activity and of repose belongs to the divine Son in His divine-human nature. With that arrogance which is the very audacity of blasphemy, if it be not the simplicity of a divine consciousness, He puts His own work side by side with the Father’s work, as the same in principle, the same in method, the same in purpose, the same in its majestic coincidence of repose and of energy.

‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore for Me, as for Him, there is no need of a Sabbath of repose.’ Human activity is dissipated by toil, human energy is exhausted by expenditure. Man works and is weary; man works and is distracted. For the

recovery of the serenity of his spirit, and for the renewal of his physical strength, repose of body and gathering in of mind, such as the Sabbath brought, were needed; but neither is needed for Him who toils unwearied in the heavens; and neither is needed for the divine nature of Him who labours in labours parallel with the Father's here upon the earth.

Now remember that this is no abolition of the Sabbath rest for Christ's followers. Rather the ground on which He here asserts His superiority over, and His non-dependence upon, such a repose shows, or at all events implies, that all mere human workers need such rest, and should thankfully accept it. But it is a claim on His part to a divine equality. It is a claim on His part to do works which are other than human works. It is a claim on His part to be the Lord of a divine institution, living above the need of it, and able to mould it at His will.

And so it opens up depths, into which we cannot go now, of the relations of that divine Father and that divine Son; and makes us feel that the little incident in which He turned to a paralysed man and said: 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk,' on the Sabbath day, like some small floating leaf of sea-weed upon the surface, has great deep tendrils that go down and down into the very abyss of things, and lays hold upon that central truth of Christianity, the divinity of the Son of God, who is One with the ever-working Father.

IV. Lastly, we have in this incident yet another lesson. We have the Healer who is also the Judge, warning the healed of the possibilities of a relapse.

'Jesus findeth him in the Temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' The man's eight-

and-thirty years of illness had apparently been brought on by dissipation. It was a sin of flesh, avenged in the flesh, that had given him that miserable life. One would have thought he had got warning enough, but we all know the old proverb about what happened when the devil was ill, and what befell his resolutions when he got better. And so Christ comes to him again with this solemn warning: 'There is a worse thing than eight-and-thirty years of paralysis. You fell once, and sore was your punishment. If you fall twice, your punishment will be sorer.' Why? Because the first one had done him no good. So here are lessons for us. There is always danger that we shall fall back into old sins, even if we think we have overcome them. The mystic influence of habit, enfeebled will, the familiar temptation, the imagination rebelling, the memory tempting, sometimes even, as in the case of a man that has been a drunkard, the physical effect of the odour of his temptation upon his nostrils—all these things make it extremely unlikely that a man who has once been under the condemnation of any evil shall never be tempted to fall under its sway again.

And such a fall is not only more criminal than the former, it is more deadly than the former. 'It were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn aside.' 'The last state of that man is worse than the first.'

My brother, there is no blacker condemnation; and if I may use a strong word, there is no hotter hell, than that which belongs to an apostate Christian. 'It has happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his vomit again.' Very unpolite,

a very coarse metaphor? Yes; to express a far worse reality.

Christian men and women! you have been made whole. 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.' And turn to that Lord and say, 'Hold Thou me up and I shall be saved.' Then the enemies will not be able to recapture you, and the chains which have dropped from your wrists will never enclose them any more.

THE LIFE-GIVER AND JUDGE

'But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. 18. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. 19. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 20. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. 21. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. 22. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. 26. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; 27. And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.'—JOHN v. 17-27.

'THE Jews' were up in arms because Jesus had delivered a man from thirty-eight years of misery. They had no human sympathies for the sufferer, whom hope deferred had made sick and hopeless, but they shuddered at the breach of the Sabbath. 'Sacrifice' was more important in their view than 'mercy.' They did not acknowledge that the miracle proved Christ's Messiahship, but they were quite sure that doing it on the Sabbath proved His wickedness. How

formalism twists men's judgments of the relative magnitude of form and spirit!

Jesus' vindication of His action roused them still farther, for He put it on a ground which seemed to them nothing short of blasphemy: 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work.' They fastened on one point in that great saying, namely, that it claimed Sonship in a special sense, and vindicated His right to disregard the Sabbath law on that ground. God's rest is not inaction. 'Preservation is a continual creation.' All being subsists because God is ever working. The Son co-operates with the Father, and for Him, as for the Father, the Sabbath law does not apply. The charge of breaking the Sabbath fades into insignificance before the sin, in the objectors' eyes, of making such claims. Therefore our Lord proceeds to expand and justify them.

He makes, first, a general statement in verses 19 and 20, in which He sets forth the relation involved in the very idea of Fatherhood and Sonship. He, as perfect Son of God, is perfectly one with the Father in will and act, and so knit to Him in sympathy that a self-originated action is impossible, not by reason of defect of power, but by reason of unity of being. That perfect unity is expressed negatively ('can do nothing') and then positively ('doeth likewise'). But it is not manifest in actions alone, but has its deep roots in the perfect love which flows ever from each to each, and in the Father's perfect communication to the Son, and the Son's perfect reception from the Father. Jesus claimed to stand in such a relation to the Father that He was able to do whatsoever the Father did, and 'in like manner' as the Father did it; that He was the unique object of the Father's love, and capable of receiving

complete communications as to 'all things that Himself doeth'; that He lived in such complete unity with the Father that His every act was the result of it, and that no trace of self-will had ever tinged His perfect spirit. What man has ever made such claims and not been treated as insane? He makes them, and likewise says that He is 'lowly of heart'; and the world listens, if not believing, at any rate reverent, as in the presence of the best man that ever lived. Strange goodness, to claim such divine prerogatives, unless the claim is valid!

It is expanded in verses 21-23 into two great classes of works, which Jesus says that He does. Both are distinctively divine works. To give life and to judge the world are equally beyond human power; they are equally His actions. These are the 'greater works' which He foretells in verse 20, and they are greater than the miracle of healing which had originated the whole conversation. To give life at first, and to give it again to the dead, and not only to revivify, but to raise them, are plainly competent to no power short of the divine; and here Jesus calmly claims them.

That tremendous claim is here made in the widest sense, including both the corporeally and the spiritually dead, who are afterwards treated of separately. The Son is the fountain of life in all the aspects of that wide-reaching word; and He 'quickeneth whom He will,' as He had spontaneously healed the impotent man. Does that assertion contradict the other, just before it, that He does nothing of Himself? No; for His will, while His, is ever harmonious with the Father's, just as His love, which is ever coincident with the Father's. Does that assertion imply His arbitrary pleasure, or make man's will a cipher? No; for His

will is guided by righteous love, and wills to quicken those who comply with His conditions. But the assertion does declare that His will to quicken is omnipotent, and that His voice can pierce 'the dull, cold ear of death,' and bring back the soul to the empty house of this tabernacle, or rouse the spirit 'dead in trespasses.'

The other divine prerogative of judging is inseparable from that of revivifying, and in regard to it Christ's claim is still higher, for He says that it is wholly vested in Him as Son. The idea of judgment here, like that of quickening, with which it is associated, is to be taken in its more general sense ('all judgment'), and therefore as including both the present judgment, for which Jesus said that He was come into the world, and which men pass on themselves by the very fact of their attitude to Him and His Gospel, and also the future final judgment, which manifests character and determines destiny. Both these has the Father given into the hands of the Son.

The purpose, so far as men are concerned, of the Son's investiture, with these solemn prerogatives, is that He may receive universal divine honour. A narrower purpose was stated in verse 20, where the persons seeing His works are only His then audience, and the effect sought to be produced is merely 'marvel.' But wonder is meant to lead on to recognition of the meaning of His power, and of the mystery of His person, and that, again, to rendering to Him precisely the same honour as is due to the Father. No more unmistakable demand for worship, no more emphatic assertion of divinity, can be made than lie in these words. To worship Christ does not intercept the honour due to God; to worship the Son is to worship

the Father; and no man honours the Father who sent Him who does not honour the Son whom He has sent.

In verses 24-27 the two related prerogatives are presented in their spiritual aspect, while in the later verses of the chapter the resurrection and quickening of the literally dead are dealt with. Mark the significant new term introduced in verse 24, 'He that believeth.' That spiritual resurrection from the death of sin and self is wrought on 'whom He will,' but He wills that it shall be wrought on them who believe. Similarly, in verse 25, it is 'they that hear' who 'shall live.' It must be so, for there is no other way by which life from Him, who is the Life, can pass into and quicken us than by our opening our hearts by faith for its inflow. The mysteries of the Son's divinity and of His imparted life are deep, but the condition of receiving that life is plain. If we will trust Jesus, we shall live; if not, we are dead. Trusting Him is trusting the Father that sent Him, and that Father becomes accessible to our trust when we 'hear' Christ's 'word.'

The effects of faith are immediate, and the poor present may be enriched and clothed in celestial light for each of us, if we will. For Jesus does not point first to the mysteries of the resurrection of the dead, and the tremendous solemnities of the final judgment, but to what we may each enter upon at any moment. The believing man '*hath* eternal life,' and '*cometh* not into judgment.' That life is not reserved to be entered on in the blessed future, but is a present possession. True, it will blossom into unexampled nobleness when it is transported into its native country, like some exotic in our colder climates if it were carried back to the tropics. But it is a present possession, and heaven is not different in kind from the Christian life on earth,

but differs mainly in degree and in circumstances. And he that has the life here and now is, by its moulding of his outward life, preserved from the sins which would bring him into judgment, and the merciful judgment to which he is still subject is that for which his truest self longs. And that blessed condition carries in it the pledge that, at the last great day, which is to others a 'day of wrath, a dreadful day,' he whom Christ has quickened by His own indwelling life shall have 'boldness before Him.'

Obviously, in these verses the present effects of faith are in view, since Jesus emphatically declares that the 'hour now is' when they can be realised. Once more He states in the strongest terms, and as the reason for the assurance that faith secures to us life, His possession of the two divine prerogatives of quickening and judging. What a paradox it is to say that it is '*given*' to Him to have '*life in Himself*'! And when was that gift given? In the depths of eternity.

He 'sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be,' and hence He can impart life and lose none. Inseparably connected with that given, and yet self-inherent, life, is the capacity for executing judgment which belongs to Him as 'a Son of man.' It has been as 'the Son' of the Father that it has been considered, in the previous verses, as belonging to Him; but now it is as a true man that He is fitted to bear, and actually is clothed with, that judicial power. No doubt He is Judge of all, because by His incarnation and earthly life He presents to all the offer of eternal life, by their attitude to which offer men are judged. But the connection of thought seems rather to be that Christ's Manhood, inextricably intertwined with His divinity, is equally needed with the latter to constitute Him our

Judge. He 'knoweth our frame,' from the inside, as it were, and the participation in our nature which fits Him to 'be a merciful and faithful High Priest' also fits Him to be the Judge of mankind.

THE FOURTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.'—JOHN vi. 11.

THIS narrative of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand is introduced into John's Gospel with singular abruptness. We read in the first verse of the chapter: 'After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee,' *i.e.* from the western to the eastern side. But the Evangelist does not tell us how or when He got to the western side. 'These things,' which are recorded in the previous chapter, are the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, the consequent outburst of Jewish hostility, and the profound and solemn discourse of our Lord, in which He claims filial relationship to the Father. So that we must insert between the chapters a journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, and a lapse at all events of some months—or, if the feast referred to in the previous chapter be, as it may be, the Passover, an interval of nearly a year. So little care for the mere framework of events has this fourth Gospel; so entirely would the Evangelist have us see that his reason for narrating this miracle is mainly its spiritual lessons and the revelation which it makes of Christ as Himself the Bread of Life.

Similarly, he has no care to tell us anything about

the reasons for our Lord's retirement with His disciples from Galilee to the eastern bank. These we have to learn from the other Evangelists. They give us several concurrent motives—the news of the death of John the Baptist; and of the desire of the bloody tyrant to see Jesus, which foreboded evil; also the return of the twelve Apostles from their trial journey, which involved the necessity of rest for them; and, perhaps, the approach of the Passover, which our Lord did not purpose to observe in Jerusalem because of the Jewish hostility, and which, therefore, suggested the withdrawal to temporary retirement.

All these reasons concurring, He and His disciples would seek for a brief space of seclusion and repose. But the hope of securing such was vain. The people followed in crowds so eagerly, so hastily, in such enormous numbers, that no natural or ordinary provision for their wants could be thought of. Hence the occasion for the miracle before us.

Now I think that this narrative, with which I wish to deal, falls mainly into two portions, both of which suggest for us some important lessons. There is, first, the preparations for the sign; and then there is the sign itself. Let us look at these two points in succession.

I. First, then, the preparations for the sign.

Now it is to be observed that this is the only incident before our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem which is recorded by all four Evangelists; therefore the variations between the narratives are of especial interest, and these variations are very considerable. We find, for instance, that in John's account the question as to how the bread was to be provided came from Christ; in the other Evangelists' accounts that question is dis-

cussed first amongst the Apostles privately. We find from John's narrative that the question was suggested even before the multitudes had come to Jesus. We find in the Synoptic Gospels that it arose at the close of a long day of teaching and of healing.

Now it is possible that this diversity of time may be the solution of the diversity of the person proposing. That is to say, it is quite legitimate to conclude that John's account takes up the incident at an earlier period than the other Evangelists do, and that the full order of events was this; that, privately, at the beginning of the day, whilst the people were yet flocking to our Lord, He, to one of the disciples alone, suggests the question, 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?' and that the answer, 'Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient that every one of them may take a little,' explains for us the suggestion of the same amount at a subsequent part of the day, by the Apostles when they asked our Lord the question, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread that these may eat?'

Be that as it may, we may pause for a moment upon this question of our Lord's, 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?'

Now notice what a lovely glimpse we get there into the quick-rising sympathy of the Saviour with all forms of human necessity. He had gone away to snatch a brief moment of rest. The rest is denied Him; the hurrying crowds come pressing with their vulgar curiosity—for it was nothing better—after Him. No movement of impatience passes across His mind; no reluctance as He turns away from the vanishing prospect of a quiet afternoon with His friends. He looks upon them, and the first thought is a quick, instinctive

movement of a divine and yet most human sympathy. The question rises in His mind of how He was to provide for them; they were not hungry yet; they had not thought where their bread was to come from. But He cared for the careless, and His heart was prophetic of their necessities, and quick to determine 'what He should do' to supply them. So is it ever. Before we call, He answers. Thy mercy, O loving Christ! needs no more than the sight of human necessities, or even the anticipation of them, swiftly to bestir itself for their satisfaction and their supply.

But, farther, He selects for the question Philip, a man who seems to have been what is called—as if it were the highest praise—an 'intensely practical person'; who seems to have had little faith in anything that he could not get hold of by his senses, and who lived upon the low level of 'common sense.' He always lays stress upon 'seeing.' His answer to Nathanael when he said, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' was, 'Come and see.' A very good answer, and yet one that relies only on the external manifestation of Christ to the senses. Then, on another occasion, he breaks in upon the lofty spiritualities of our Lord's final discourse to His disciples, with the *malapropos* request, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' And so here, to the man who believed in his eyesight, and did not easily apprehend much else, Jesus puts this question, 'Where is the bread to come from for all these people? This He said to prove him.' He hoped that the question might have shaped itself in the hearer's mind into a promise, and that he might have been able to say in answer, 'Thou canst supply; we need not buy.'

So Christ does still. He puts problems before us, too, to settle; takes us, as it were, into His confidence with

interrogations that try us, whether we can rise above the level of the material and visible, or whether all our conceptions of possibilities are bounded by these. And sometimes, even though the question at first sight seems to evoke only such a response as it did here, it works more deeply down below afterwards, and we are helped by the very difficulty to rise to a clear faith.

Philip's answer is very significant. 'Two hundred pennyworth of bread are not sufficient.' He casts his eye over the multitude, he makes a rough, rapid calculation, one does not exactly see the data on which it was based; and he comes to the conclusion, 'Two hundred pennyworth' (in our English money some £7 or £8 worth) would give them each a morsel. And no doubt he thought himself very practical. He was a man of figures; he believed in what could be put into tables and statistics. Yes; and like a great many other people of his sort, he left out one small element in his calculation, and that was Jesus Christ, and so his answer went creeping along the low levels, dragging itself like a half-wounded snake, when it might have risen on the wings of faith into the empyrean, and soared and sung.

So learn that when we have to deal with Christ's working—and when have we not to deal with Christ's working?—perhaps probabilities that can be tabulated are not altogether the best bases upon which to rest our calculations. Learn that the audacity of a faith that expects great things, though there be nothing visible upon which to build, is wiser and more prudent than the creeping common-sense that adheres to facts which are shadows, and forgets that the chief fact is that we have an Almighty Helper and Friend at our sides.

Still further, among these preliminaries, let us point to the exhibition of the inadequate resources which Christ, according to the fuller narrative in the other Evangelists, desired to know. 'There is a little lad here with five barley loaves'—one per thousand—'and two small fishes'—insufficient in quantity and very, very common in quality, for barley bread was the food of the poorest. 'But what are they among so many?' And Christ says, 'Bring them to Me.'

Christ's preparation for making our poor resources adequate for anything is to drive home into our hearts the consciousness of their insufficiency. We need, first of all, to be brought to this, 'All that I have is this wretched little stock; and what is that measured against the work that I have to do, and the claims upon me?' Only when we are brought to that can His great power pour itself into us and fill us with rejoicing and overcoming strength. The old mystics used to say, and they said truly: 'You must be emptied of yourself before you can be filled by God.' And the first thing for any man to learn, in preparation for receiving a mightier power than his own into his opening heart, is to know that all his own strength is utter and absolute weakness. 'What are they among so many?' When we have once gone right down into the depths of felt impotence, and when our work has risen before us, as if it were far too great for our poor strengths which are weaknesses, then we are brought, and only then, into the position in which we may begin to hope that power equal to our desire will be poured into our souls.

And so the last of the preparations that I will touch upon is that majestic preparation for blessing by obedience. 'And Jesus said, Make the men sit down.' And there they sat themselves, as Mark puts it in his

picturesque way, like so many garden plots—the rectangular oblongs in a garden in which pot-herbs are grown—on the green grass, below the blue sky, by the side of the quiet lake. Cannot you fancy how some of them seated themselves with a scoff, and some with a quiet smile of incredulity; and some half sheepishly and reluctantly; and some in mute expectancy; and some in foolish wonder; and yet all of them with a partial obedience? And says John in the true translation: ‘So the men sat down, therefore Jesus took the loaves.’ Sit you down where He bids you, and your mouths will not be long empty. Do the things He tells you, and you will get the food that you need. Our business is to obey and to wait, and His business is, when we are seated, to open His hand and let the mercy drop. So much for the preparations for this great miracle.

II. Now, in the next place, a word as to the sign itself.

I take two lessons, and two only, out of it. I see in it, first, a revelation of Christ, as continually through all the ages sustaining men’s physical life. And I see in it, second, a symbol of Christ as Himself the Bread of Life.

As to the first, there is here, I believe, a revelation of the law of the universe, of Christ as being through all the ages the Sustainer of the physical life of men. What was done then once, with the suppression of certain links in the chain, is done always, with the introduction of those links. The miraculous moment in the narrative is not described to us. We do not know where or when there came in the supernatural power which multiplied the loaves—probably as they passed from the hand of the Master. But be that as

it may, it was Christ's will that made the provision which fed all these five thousand. And I believe that the teaching of Scripture is in accordance with the deepest philosophy, that the one cause of all physical phenomena is the will of a present God; howsoever that may usually conform to the ordinary method of working which people generalise and call laws. The reason why anything is, and the reason why all things change, is the energy there and then of the indwelling God who is in all His works, and who is the only Will and Power in the physical world.

And I believe, further, that Scripture teaches us that that continuous will, which is the cause of all phenomena and the underlying subsistence on which all things repose, is all managed and mediated by Him who from of old was named the Word; 'in whom was life, and without whom was not anything made that was made.' Our Christ is Creator, our Christ is Sustainer, our Christ moves the stars and feeds the sparrows. He was 'before all things, and in Him all things consist.' He opens His hand—and there is the print of a nail in it—and 'satisfies the desire of every living thing.'

So learn how to think of second causes, and see in this story a transient manifestation, in unusual form, of an eternal and permanent fact. Jesus took the loaves and distributed to them that were set down.

And so, secondly, the miracle is a *sign*—a symbol of Him as the true Bread and Food of the world. That is the explanation and commentary which He Himself appends to it in the subsequent part of the chapter, in the great discourse which is founded upon this miracle.

'I am the Bread of Life.' There is a triple statement by our Lord upon this subject in the remaining portion

of the chapter. He says, 'I am the Bread of Life.' My personality is that which not only sustains life when it is given, but gives life to them that feed upon it. But more than that, 'the bread which I will give,' pointing to some future 'giving' beyond the present moment, and therefore something more than His life and example, 'is My flesh, which'—in some as yet unexplained way—'I give for the life of the world.' And that there may be no misunderstanding, there is a third, deeper, more mysterious statement still: 'My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' Repulsive and paradoxical, but in its very offensiveness and paradox, proclaiming that it covers a mighty truth, and the truth, brother, is this, the one Food that gives life to will, affections, conscience, understanding, to the whole spirit of a man, is that great Sacrifice of the Incarnate Lord who gave upon the Cross His flesh, and on the Cross shed His blood, for the life of the world that was 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, and we feed on the sacrifice. Let your conscience, your heart, your desires, your anticipations, your understanding, your will, your whole being feed on Him. He will be cleansing, He will be love, He will be fruition, He will be hope, He will be truth, He will be righteousness, He will be all. Feed upon Him by that faith which is the true eating of the true Bread, and your souls shall live.

And notice finally here, the result of this miracle as transferred to the region of symbol. 'They did all eat and were filled'; men, women, children, both sexes, all ages, all classes, found the food that they needed in the bread that came from Christ's hands. If any man wants dainties that will tickle the palates of Epicureans, let him go somewhere else. But if he wants bread,

to keep the life in and to stay his hunger, let him go to this Christ who is 'human nature's daily food.'

The world has scoffed for nineteen centuries at the barley bread that the Gospel provides; coarse by the side of its confectionery, but it is enough to give life to all who eat it. It goes straight to the primal necessities of human nature. It does not coddle a class, or pander to unwholesome, diseased, or fastidious appetites. It is the food of the world, and not of a section. All men can relish it, all men need it. It is offered to them all.

And more than that; notice the inexhaustible abundance. 'They did all eat, and were filled.' And then they took up—not 'of the fragments,' as our Bible gives it, conveying the idea of the crumbs that littered the grass after the repast was over, but of the 'broken pieces'—the portions that came from Christ's hands—twelve baskets full, an immensely greater quantity than they had to start with. 'The gift doth stretch itself as 'tis received.' Other goods and other possessions perish with the using, but this increases with use. The more one eats, the more there is for him to eat. And all the world may live upon it for ever, and there will be more at the end than there was at the beginning.

Brethren, why do ye 'spend your money for that which is not bread'? There is no answer worthy of a rational soul, no answer that will stand either the light of conscience or the clearer light of the Day of Judgment. I come to you now, and although my poor words may be but like the barley bread and the two fishes—nothing amongst all this gathered audience—I come with Christ in my hands, and I say to you, 'Eat, and your souls shall live.' He will spread a table for

you in the wilderness, and take you to sit at last at His table in His Kingdom.

'FRAGMENTS' OR 'BROKEN PIECES'

'When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.'—JOHN vi. 12.

THE Revised Version correctly makes a very slight, but a very significant change in the words of this verse. Instead of 'fragments' it reads 'broken pieces.' The change seems very small, but the effect of it is considerable. It helps our picture of the scene by correcting a very common misapprehension as to what it was which the Apostles are bid to gather up. The general notion, I suppose, is that the 'fragments' are the crumbs that fell from each man's hands, as he ate, and the picture before the imagination of the ordinary reader is that of the Apostles' carefully collecting the *débris* of the meal from the grass where it had dropped. But the true notion is that the 'broken pieces which remain over' are the unused portions into which our Lord's miracle-working hand had broken the bread, and the true picture is that of the Apostles carefully putting away in store for future use the abundant provision which their Lord had made, beyond the needs of the hungry thousands. And that conception of the command teaches far more beautiful and deeper lessons than the other.

For if the common translation and notion be correct, all that is taught us, or at least what is principally taught us, is the duty of thrift and careful economy; whereas the other shows more clearly that what is taught us is that Jesus Christ always gets ready for His

people something over and above the exact limits of their bare need at the moment, that He prepares for His poor and hungry dependants in royal fashion, leaving ever a wide margin of difference between what would be just enough to keep the life in them, and His liberal housekeeping. Further, we are taught a lesson of wise husbandry and economy in the use of that overplus of grace which Christ ministers, and are instructed that the laws of prudent thrift have as honoured a place in the management of spiritual as of temporal wealth. 'Gather up,' says our Lord, 'the pieces which I broke, the large provision which I made for possible wants. My gifts are in excess of the requirements of the moment. Take care of them till you need them.' That is a worthier interpretation of His command than one which merely sees in it an exhortation to thrifty taking care of the crumbs that fell from the lips of the hungry eaters.

Looking at this command, then, with this slight alteration of rendering, and consequent widening of scope, we may briefly try to gather up the lessons which it obviously suggests.

I. We have that thought, to which I have already referred, as more strikingly brought out by the slight alteration of translation, which, by the use of '*broken pieces*,' suggests the connection with Christ's *breaking* the loaves and fishes. We are taught to think of the large surplus in Christ's gifts over and above our need. Our Lord has Himself given us a commentary upon this miracle. All Christ's miracles are parables, for all teach us, on the level of natural and outward things, lessons that are true in regard to the spiritual world; but this one is especially symbolical, as indeed are all these recorded in John's Gospel. And here

we have Christ, on the day after the miracle, commenting upon it in His long and profound discourse upon the Bread of Life, which plainly intimates that He meant His office of feeding the hungry crowds, with bread supernaturally increased by the touch of His hand, to be but a picture and a guide which might lead to the apprehension of the higher view of Himself as the 'bread of God which came down from heaven,' feeding and 'giving life to the world' by His broken body and shed blood.

So that we are not inventing a fanciful interpretation of an incident not meant to have any meaning deeper than shows on the surface, when we say that the abundance far beyond what the eaters could make use of at the moment really represented the large surplus of inexhaustible resources and unused grace which is treasured for us all in Christ Jesus. Whom He feeds He feasts. His gifts answer our need, and over-answer it, for He is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above that which we ask or think,' and neither our conceptions, nor our petitions, nor our present powers of receiving, are the real limits of the illimitable grace that is laid up for us in Christ, and which, potentially, we have each of us in our hands whenever we lay our hands on Him.

Oh, dear friends! what you and I have ever had and felt of Christ's power, sweetness, preciousness, and love is as nothing compared with the infinite depths of all those which lie in Him. The sea fills the little creeks along its shore, but it rolls in unfathomed depths, boundless to the horizon away out there in the mid-Atlantic. And all the present experience of all Christian people, of what Christ is, is like the experience of the first settlers in some great undis-

covered continent; who timidly plant a little fringe of population round its edge and grow their scanty crops there, whilst the great prairies of miles and miles, with all their wealth and fertility, are lying untrodden and unknown in the heart of the untraversed continent. The most powerful telescope leaves nebulae unresolved, which, though they seem but a dim dust of light, are all ablaze with mighty suns. The 'goodness' which He has 'wrought before the sons of men for them that fear' Him is, as the Psalmist adoringly exclaims, wondrously 'great,' but still greater is that which the same verse of the Psalm celebrates—the goodness which He has 'laid up for them that fear Him.' The gold which is actually coined and passing from hand to hand, is but a fraction, a mere scale, as it were, off the surface of the great uncoined mass of bullion that lies stored in the vaults there. Christ is a great deal more than any man, or than all men, have yet found Him to be. 'Gather up the broken pieces'; and see that nothing of that infinite preciousness of His be lost by us.

II. Then there is another very simple lesson which I draw. This command suggests for us Christ's thrift (if I may use the word) in the employment of His miraculous power.

Surely they might have said: 'If thou canst multiply five loaves into all this abundance, why should we be trudging about, each with a basket on his back full of bread, when we have with us He whose word can make it for us at any moment?' Yes, but a law which characterises all the miraculous, in both the Old and the New Testament, and which broadly distinguishes Christ's miracles from all the false miracles of false religions is this, that the miraculous is pared down

to the smallest possible amount, that not one hairsbreadth beyond the necessity shall be done by miracle; that whatever men can do they shall do; that their work shall stop as late, and begin again as soon as possible. Thus, though Christ was going to raise Lazarus, men's hands had to roll away the stone; and when Christ had raised Lazarus, men's hands had to loose the napkins from his face. And though Christ was able to say to the daughter of Jairus, '*Talitha cumi!*' (damsel, arise!) His next word was: 'Give her something to eat.' Where the miraculous was needed it was used, and not a hairsbreadth beyond absolute necessity did it extend.

And so here Christ multiplies the bread, and yet each of the Apostles has to take a basket, probably some kind of woven wicker-work article which they would carry for holding their little necessities in their peregrinations; each Apostle has to take his basket, and perhaps emptying it of some of his humble apparel, to fill it with these bits of bread; for Christ was not going to work miracles where men's thrift and prudence could be employed.

Nor does He do so now. We live by faith, and our dependence on Him can never be too absolute. Only laziness sometimes dresses itself in the garb and speaks with the tongue of faith, and pretends to be truthful when it is only slothful. 'Why criest thou unto Me?' said God to Moses, 'speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.' True faith sets us to work. It is not to be perverted into idle and false depending upon Him to work for us, when by the use of our own ten fingers and our own brains, guided and strengthened by His working in us, we can do the work that is set before us.

III. Still further, there is another lesson here. Not only does the injunction show us Christ's thrift in the employment of the supernatural, but it teaches us our duty of thrift and care in the use of the spiritual grace bestowed upon us.

These men had given to them this miraculously made bread; but they had to exercise ordinary thrift in the preservation of the supernatural gift. Christ has been given to you by the most stupendous miracle that ever was or can be wrought, and if you are Christian people, you have the Spirit of Christ given to you, to dwell in your hearts, to make you wise and fair, gentle and strong, and altogether Christlike. But you have to take care of these gifts. You have to exercise the common virtues of economy and thrift in your use of the divine gifts as in your use of the common things of daily life. You have to use wisely and not waste the Bread of God that came down from heaven, or that Bread of God will not feed you. You have to provide the basket in which to carry the unexhausted residue of the divine gift, or you may stand hungry in the very midst of plenty, and whilst within arm's length of you there is bread enough and to spare to feed the whole world.

The lesson of my text, which is most eminently brought out if we adopt the translation which I have referred to at the beginning of these remarks, is, then, just this: Christian men, be watchful stewards of that great gift of a living Christ, the food of your souls, that has been by miracle bestowed upon you. Such gathering together for future need of the unused residue of grace may be accomplished by three ways. First, there must be a diligent use of the grace given. See that you use to the very full in the measure of

your present power of absorbing and your present need, the gift bestowed upon you. Be sure that you take in as much of Christ as you can contain before you begin to think of what to do with the overplus. If we are not careful to take what we can, and to use what we need, of Christ, there is little chance of our being faithful stewards of the surplus. The water in a mill-stream runs over the trough in great abundance when the wheel is not working, and one reason why so many Christians seem to have so much more given to them in Christ than they need is because they are doing no work to use up the gift.

A second essential to such stewardship is the careful guarding of the grace given from whatever would injure it. Let not worldliness, business, cares of the world, the sorrows of life, its joys, duties, anxieties or pleasures—let not these so come into your hearts that they will elbow Christ out of your hearts, and dull your appetite for the true Bread that came down from heaven.

And lastly, not only by use and by careful guarding, but also by earnest desire for larger gifts of the Christ who is large beyond all measure, shall we receive more and more of His sweetness and His preciousness into our hearts, and of His beauty and glory into our transfigured characters. The basket that we carry, this recipient heart of ours, is elastic. It can stretch to hold any amount that you like to put into it. The desire for more of Christ's grace will stretch its capacity, and as its capacity increases the inflowing gift greatens, and a larger Christ fills the larger room of my poor heart.

So the lesson is taught us of our prudence in the care and use of the grace bestowed on us, and we are

bidden to cherish a happy confidence in the inexhaustible resources of Christ, and the continual gift in the future of even larger measures of grace, which are all ours already, given to us at the first reception of Him into our hearts, and only needing our faithfulness to be growingly ours in experience as they are ours from the first in germ.

IV. Finally, a solemn warning is implied in this command, and its reason 'that nothing be lost.'

Then there is a possibility of losing the gift that is freely given to us. We may waste the bread, and so, sometime or other when we are hungry, awake to the consciousness that it has dropped out of our slack hands. The abundance of Christ's grace may, so far as you are profited or enriched by it, be like the unclaimed millions of money which nobody asks for and that is of use to no living soul. You may be paupers while all God's riches in glory are at your disposal, and starving while baskets full of bread broken for us by Christ lie unused at our sides. Some of us have never tasted the sweetness or been fed by the nutritiousness of that Bread of God which came down from heaven. And more marvellous still, there may be some of us, who having come to Christ hungry and been fed by Him, have ceased to care for the pure nourishment and taste for the manna, and are turning again with gross appetite to the husks in the swine's trough. Negligent Christians! worldly Christians! you who care more for money and other dainties and delights which perish with the using—backsliding Christians, who once hungered and thirsted for more of Christ, and now have no longing for Him—awake to the danger in which you stand of letting all your spiritual wealth slip through your fingers; behold the treasures,

yet unreached, within your grasp, and seek to garner and realise them. Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, lest everything be lost.

THE FIFTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'So when they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. 20. But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid.'—JOHN VI. 19, 20.

THERE are none of our Lord's parables recorded in this Gospel, but all the miracles which it narrates are parables. Moral and religious truth is communicated by the outward event, as in the parable it is communicated by the story. The mere visible fact becomes more than semi-transparent. The analogy between the spiritual and the natural world which men instinctively apprehend, of which the poet and the orator and the religious teacher have always made abundant use, and which it has sometimes been attempted, unsuccessfully as I think, to elevate to the rank of a scientific truth, underlies the whole series of these miracles. It is the principal if not the only key to the meaning of this one before us.

The symbolism which regards life under the guise of a voyage, and its troubles and difficulties under the metaphor of storm and tempest, is especially natural to nations that take kindly to the water, like us Englishmen. I do not know that there is any instance, either in the Old or in the New Testament, of the use of that to us very familiar metaphor; but the emblem of the sea as the symbol of trouble, unrest, rebellious power, is very familiar to the writers of the Old Testament. And the picture of the divine path as in the waters, and of the divine prerogative as being to 'tread

upon the heights of the sea,' as Job has it, is by no means unknown. So the natural symbolism, and the Old Testament use of the expressions, blend together, as I think, in suggesting the one point of view from which this miracle is to be regarded.

It is found in two of the other Evangelists, and the condensed account of it which we have in this Gospel, by its omission of Peter's walking on the water, and of some other smaller but graphic details that the other Evangelists give us, serves to sharpen the symbolical meaning of the whole story, and to bring that as its great purpose and signification into prominence.

We shall, I think, then, best gain the lessons intended to be drawn if we simply follow the points of the narrative in their order as they stand here.

I. We have here, first of all, then, the struggling toilers.

The other Evangelists tell us that after the feeding of the five thousand our Lord 'constrained' His disciples to get into the ship, and to pass over to the other side. The language implies unwillingness, to some extent, on their part, and the exercise of authority upon His. Our Evangelist, who does not mention the constraint, supplies us with the reason for it. The preceding miracle had worked up the excitement of the mob to a very dangerous point. Crowds are always the same, and this crowd thought, as any other crowd anywhere and in any age would have done, that the prophet that could make bread at will was the kind of prophet whom they wanted. So they determined to take Him by force, and make Him a king; and Christ, seeing the danger, and not desiring that His Kingdom should be furthered by such unclean hands and gross motives, determined to withdraw

Himself into the loneliness of the bordering hills. It was wise to divide the little group; it would distract attention; it might lead some of the people, as we know it did lead them, to follow the boat when they found it was gone. It would save the Apostles from being affected by the coarse, smoky enthusiasm of the crowd. It would save them from revealing the place of His retirement. It might enable Him to steal away more securely unobserved. So they are sent across to the other side of the lake, some five or six miles. An hour or two might have done it, but for some unknown reason they seem to have lingered. Perhaps they had no special call for haste. The Paschal moon, nearly full, would be shining down upon the waters; their hearts and minds would be busy with the miracle which they had just seen. And so they may have drifted along, not caring much when they reached their destination. But suddenly one of the gusts of wind which are frequently found upon mountain lakes, especially towards nightfall, rose and soon became a gale with which they could not battle. Our Evangelist does not tell us how long it lasted, but we get a note of time from St. Mark, who says it was 'about the fourth watch of the night'; that is between the hours of three and six in the morning of the subsequent day. So that for some seven or eight hours at least they had been tugging at the useless oars, or sitting shivering, wet and weary, in the boat.

Is it not the history of the Church in a nutshell? Is it not the symbol of life for us all? The solemn law under which we live demands persistent effort, and imposes continual antagonism upon us; there is no reason why we should regard that as evil, or think ourselves hardly used, because we are not fair-weather

sailors. The end of life is to make men; the meaning of all events is to mould character. Anything that makes me stronger is a blessing, anything that develops my *morale* is the highest good that can come to me. If therefore antagonism mould in me

‘The wrestling thews that throw the world,’

and give me good, strong muscles, and put tan and colour into my cheek, I need not mind the cold and the wet, nor care for the whistling of the wind in my face, nor the dash of the spray over the bows. Summer sailing in fair weather, amidst land-locked bays, in blue seas, and under calm skies, may be all very well for triflers, but

‘Blown seas and storming showers’

are better if the purpose of the voyage be to brace us and call out our powers.

And so be thankful if, when the boat is crossing the mouth of some glen that opens upon the lake, a sudden gust smites the sheets and sends you to the helm, and takes all your effort to keep you from sinking. Do not murmur, or think that God’s Providence is strange, because many and many a time when ‘it is dark, and Jesus is not yet come to us,’ the storm of wind comes down upon the lake and threatens to drive us from our course. Let us rather recognise Him as the Lord who, in love and kindness, sends all the different kinds of weather which, according to the old proverb, make up the full-summed year.

And then notice how, in this first picture of our text, the symbolism so naturally lends itself to spiritual meanings, not only in regard to the tempest that taught the unthinking voyagers, but also in regard to other points; such as the darkness amidst which they

had to fight the tempest, and the absence of the Master. Once before, they had been caught in a similar storm on the lake, but it was daylight then, and Jesus was with them, and that made all the difference. This time it was night, and they looked up in vain to the green Eastern hills, and wondered where in their folds He was lurking, so far from their help. Mark gives us one sweet touch when he tells us that Christ on the hillside there *saw* them toiling in rowing, but they did not see Him. No doubt they felt themselves deserted, and sent many a wistful glance of longing towards the shore where He was. Hard thoughts of Him may have been in some of their minds. 'Master, carest Thou not?' would be springing to some of their lips with more apparent reason than in the other storm on the lake. But His calm and loving gaze looked down pitying on all their fear and toil. The darkness did not hide from Him, nor His own security on the steadfast land make Him forget, nor his communion with the Father so absorb Him as to exclude thoughts of them.

It is a parable and a prophecy of the perpetual relation between the absent Lord and the toiling Church. He is on the mountain while we are on the sea. The stable eternity of the Heavens holds Him; we are tossed on the restless mutability of time, over which we toil at His command. He is there interceding for us. Whilst He prays He beholds, and He beholds that He may help us by His prayer. The solitary crew were not so solitary as they thought. That little dancing speck on the waters, which held so much blind love and so much fear and trouble, was in His sight, as on the calm mountain-top He communed with God. No wonder that weary hearts and lonely ones, groping

amidst the darkness, and fighting with the tempests and the sorrows of life, have ever found in our story a symbol that comes to them with a prophecy of hope and an assurance of help, and have rejoiced to know that they on the sea are beheld of the Christ in the sky, and that 'the darkness hideth not from' His loving eye.

II. And now turn to the next stage of the story before us. We have the approaching Christ.

'When they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs,' and so were just about the middle of the lake, 'they see Jesus walking on the sea and drawing nigh unto the ship.' They were about half-way across the lake. We do not know at what hour in the fourth watch the Master came. But probably it was towards daybreak. Toiling had endured for a night. It would be in accordance with the symbolism that joy and help should come with the morning.

If we look for a moment at the miraculous fact, apart from the symbolism, we have a revelation here of Christ as the Lord of the material universe, a kingdom wider in its range and profounder in its authority than that which that shouting crowd had sought to force upon Him. His will consolidated the yielding wave, or sustained His material body on the tossing surges. Whether we suppose the miracle as wrought on the one or the other, makes no difference to its value as a manifestation of the glory of Christ, and of His power over the physical order of things. In the latter case there would, perhaps, be a hint of a power residing in His material frame, of which we possibly have other phases, as in the Transfiguration, which may be a prophecy of what lordship over nature is possible to a sinless manhood. However that may be,

we have here a wonderful picture which is true for all ages of the mighty Christ, to whose gentle footfall the unquiet surges are as a marble pavement; and who draws near in the purposes of His love, unhindered by antagonism, and using even opposing forces as the path for His triumphant progress. Two lessons may be drawn from this. One is that in His marvellous providence Christ uses all the tumults and unrest, the opposition and tempests which surround the ship that bears His followers, as the means of achieving His purposes. We stand before a mystery to which we have no key when we think of these two certain facts; first, the Omnipotent redeeming will of God in Christ; and, second, the human antagonism which is able to rear itself against that. And we stand in the presence of another mystery, most blessed, and yet which we cannot unthread, when we think, as we most assuredly may, that in some mysterious fashion He works His purposes by the very antagonism to His purposes, making even head-winds fill the sails, and planting His foot on the white crests of the angry and changeful billows. How often in the world's history has this scene repeated itself, and by a divine irony the enemies have become the helpers of Christ's cause, and what they plotted for destruction has turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel! 'He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and with the residue thereof He girdeth Himself.'

Another lesson for our individual lives is this, that Christ, in His sweetness and His gentle sustaining help, comes near to us all across the sea of sorrow and trouble. A more tender, a more gracious sense of His nearness to us is ever granted to us in the time of our darkness and our grief than is possible to us in the

sunny hours of joy. It is always the stormy sea that Christ comes across, to draw near to us; and they who have never experienced the tempest have yet to learn the inmost sweetness of His presence. When it is night, and it is dark, at the hour which is the keystone of night's black arch, Christ comes to us, striding across the stormy waters. Sorrow brings *Him* near to us. Do you see that sorrow does not drive *you* away from Him!

III. Then, still further, we note in the story before us the terror and the recognition.

St. John does not tell us why they were afraid. There is no need to tell us. They see, possibly in the chill uncertain light of the grey dawn breaking over the Eastern hills, a Thing coming to them across the water there. They had fought gallantly with the storm, but this questionable shape freezes their heart's blood, and a cry, that is audible above even the howling of the wind and the dash of the waves, gives sign of the superstitious terror that crept round the hearts of those commonplace, rude men.

I do not dwell upon the fact that the average man, if he fancies that anything from out of the Unseen is near him, shrinks in fear. I do not ask you whether that is not a sign and indication of the deep conviction that lies in men's souls, of a discord between themselves and the unseen world; but I ask you if we do not often mistake the coming Master, and tremble before Him when we ought to be glad?

We are often so absorbed with our work, so busy tugging at the oar, so anxiously watching the set of current, so engaged in keeping the helm right, that we have no time and no eyes to look across the ocean and see who it is that is coming to us through all the

hurly-burly. Our tears fill our eyes, and weave a veil between us and the Master. And when we do see that there is Something there, we are often afraid of it, and shrink from it. And sometimes when a gentle whisper of consolation, or some light air, as it were, of consciousness of His presence, breathes through our souls, we think that it is only a phantasm of our own making, and that the coming Christ is nothing more than the play of our thoughts and imaginations.

Oh, brethren, let no absorption in cares and duties, let no unchildlike murmurings, let no selfish abandonment to sorrow, blind you to the Lord who always comes near troubled hearts, if they will only look and see! Let no reluctance to entertain religious ideas, no fear of contact with the Unseen, no shrinking from the thought of Christ as a *Kill-joy* keep you from seeing Him as He draws near to you in your troubles. And let no sly, mocking Mephistopheles of doubt, nor any poisonous air, blowing off the foul and stagnant marshes of present materialism, make you fancy that the living Reality, treading on the flood there, is a dream or a fancy or the projection of your own imagination on to the void of space. He is real, whatever may be phenomenal and surface. The storm is not so real as the Christ, the waves not so substantial as He who stands upon them. They will pass and quieten, He will abide for ever. Lift up your hearts and be glad, because the Lord comes to you across the waters, and hearken to His voice: 'It is I! Be not afraid.'

The encouragement not to fear follows the proclamation, 'It is I!' What a thrill of glad confidence must have poured itself into their hearts, when once they rose to the height of that wondrous fact!

'Well roars the storm to those who hear
▲ deeper voice across the storm.'

There is no fear in the consciousness of His presence. It is His old word: 'Be not afraid!' And He breathes it whithersoever He comes; for His coming is the banishment of danger and the exorcism of dread. So that if only you and I, in the midst of all storm and terror, can say 'It is the Lord,' then we may catch up the grand triumphant chorus of the old psalm, and say: 'Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, yet I will not fear.' The Lord is with us; the everlasting Christ is our Helper, our Refuge, and our Strength.

IV. So, lastly, we have here in this story the end of the tempest and of the voyage.

Our Evangelist does not record, as the others do, that the storm ceased upon Christ's being welcomed into the little boat. The other Evangelists do not record, as he does, the completion of the voyage. 'Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.' The two things are cause and effect. I do not suppose, as many do, that a subordinate miracle is to be seen in that last clause of our text, or that the 'immediately' is to be taken as if it meant that without one moment's delay, or interval, the voyage was completed; but only, which I think is all that is needful, that the falling of the tempest and the calming of the waters which followed upon the Master's entrance into the vessel made the remainder of the voyage comparatively brief and swift.

It is not always true, it is very seldom true, that when Christ comes on board opposition ends, and the haven is reached. But it is always true that when

Christ comes on board a new spirit enters into the men who have Him for their companion, and are conscious that they have. It makes their work easy, and makes them 'more than conquerors' over what yet remains. With what a different spirit the weary men would bend their backs to the oars once more when they had the Master on board, and with what a different spirit you and I will set ourselves to our work if we are sure of His presence. The worst of trouble is gone when Christ shares it with us. There is a wonderful charm to stay His rough wind in the assurance that in all our affliction He is afflicted. If we feel that we are following in His footsteps, we feel that He stands between us and the blast, a refuge from the storm and a covert from the tempest. And if still, as no doubt will be the case, we have our share of trouble and storm and sorrow and difficulty, yet the worst of the gale will be passed, and though a long swell may still heave, the terror and the danger will have gone with the night, and hope and courage and gladness revive as the morning's sun breaks over the still unquiet waves, and shows us our Master with us and the white walls of the port glinting in the level beams.

Friends, life is a voyage, anyhow, with plenty of storm and danger and difficulty and weariness and exposure and anxiety and dread and sorrow, for every soul of man. But if you will take Christ on board, it will be a very different thing from what it will be if you cross the wan waters alone. Without Him you will make shipwreck of yourselves; with Him your voyage may seem perilous and be tempestuous, but He will 'make the storm a calm,' and will bring you to the haven of your desire.

HOW TO WORK THE WORK OF GOD

‘Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.’—JOHN vi. 28, 29.

THE feeding of the five thousand was the most ‘popular’ of Christ’s miracles. The Evangelist tells us, with something between a smile and a sigh, that ‘when the people saw it, they said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world,’ and they were so delighted with Him and with it, that they wanted to get up an insurrection on the spot, and make a King of Him. I wonder if there are any of that sort of people left. If two men were to come into Manchester to-morrow morning, and one of them were to offer material good, and the other wisdom and peace of heart, which of them, do you think, would have the larger following? We need not cast a stone at the unblushing, frank admiration that these men had for a Prophet who could feed them, for that is exactly the sort of prophet that a great number of us would like best if they spoke out.

So Jesus Christ had to escape from the inconvenient enthusiasm of these mistaken admirers of His; and they followed Him in their eagerness, but were met with words which lift them into another region and damp their zeal. He tries to turn away their thoughts from the miracle to a far loftier gift. He contrasts the trouble which they willingly took in order to get a meal with their indifference as to obtaining the true bread from heaven, and He bids them work for it just as they had shown themselves ready to work for the other.

They put to Him this question of my text, so strangely blending as it does right and wrong, 'You have bid us work; tell us how to work? What must we do that we may work the works of God?' Christ answers, in words that illuminate their confusions and clear the whole matter, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

I. Faith, then, is a work.

You know that the commonplace of evangelical teaching opposes faith to works; and the opposition is perfectly correct, if it be rightly understood. But I have a strong impression that a great deal of our preaching goes clean over the heads of our hearers, because we take for granted, and they fancy that they understand, the meaning of terms because the terms themselves are so familiar. And I believe that many people go to churches and chapels all their lives long, and hear this doctrine dinned into them, that they are to be saved by faith, and not by works, and never approach a definite understanding of what it means.

So let me just for a moment try to clear up the terms of this apparently paradoxical statement that faith is a work. What do we mean by faith? What do you mean by saying that you have faith in your friend, in your wife, in your husband, in your guide? You simply mean, and we mean, that you trust the person, grasping him by the act of trust. On trust the whole fabric of human society depends, as well as in another aspect of the same expression does the whole fabric of Manchester commerce. Faith, confidence, the leaning of myself on one discerned to be true, trusty, strong, sufficient for the purpose in hand, whatever it may be—that, and nothing more mysterious, nothing further away from daily life and the common emotions which

knit us to one another, is, as I take it, what the New Testament means when it insists upon faith.

Ah, we all exercise it. You put it forth in certain low levels and directions. 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,' is the short summary of the happy lives of many, I have no doubt, of my present hearers. Have you none of that confidence to spare for God? Is it all meant to be poured out upon weak, fallible, changeful creatures like ourselves, and none of it to rise to the One in whom absolute confidence may eternally be fixed?

But then, of course, as we may see by the exercise of the same emotion in regard to one another, the under side (as I have been accustomed to say to you) of this confidence in God or Christ is diffidence of myself. There is no real exercise of confidence which does not involve, as an essential part of itself, the going out from myself in order that I may lay all the weight and the responsibility of the matter in hand upon Him in whom I trust. And so Christian faith is compounded of these two elements, or rather, it has these two sides which correspond to one another. The same figure is convex or concave according as you look at it from one side or another. If you look at faith from one side, it rises towards God; if from the other, it hollows itself out into a great emptiness. And so the under side of faith is distrust; and he that puts his confidence in God thereby goes out of himself, and declares that in himself there is nothing to rest upon.

Now that two-sided confidence and diffidence, trust and distrust, which are one, is truly a work. It is not an easy one either; it is the exercise of our own inmost nature. It is an effort of will. It has to be done by coercing ourselves. It has to be maintained in the

face of many temptations and difficulties. The contrast between faith and work is between an inward act and a crowd of outward performances. But the faith which knits me to God is my act, and I am responsible for it.

But yet it is not a work, just because it is a ceasing from my own works, and going out from myself that He may enter in. Only remember, when we say, ‘Not by works of righteousness, but by the faith of Christ,’ we are but proclaiming that the inward man must exercise that act of self-abnegation and confession of its own impotence, and ceasing from all reliance on anything which it does, whereby, and whereby alone, it can be knit to God. ‘Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto eternal life. . . . This is the work of God, that ye believe.’ You are responsible for doing that, or for not doing it.

II. Secondly, faith, and not a multitude of separate acts, is what pleases God.

Mark the difference between the form of the question and that of the answer. The people say, ‘What are we to do that we may work the *works* of God?’ Christ answers in the singular: ‘This is the *work*.’ They thought of a great variety of observances and deeds. He gathers them all up into one. They thought of a pile, and that the higher it rose the more likely they were to be accepted. He unified the requirement, and He brought it all down to this one act, in which all other acts are included, and on which alone the whole weight of a man’s salvation is to rest. ‘What shall we do that we might work the works of God?’ is a question asked in all sorts of ways, by the hearts of men all round about us; and what a babble of answers comes!

The priest says, 'Rites and ceremonies.' The thinker says, 'Culture, education.' The moralist says, 'Do this, that, and the other thing,' and enumerates a whole series of separate acts. Jesus Christ says, 'One thing is needful. . . . This is the work of God.' He brushes away the sacerdotal answer and the answer of the mere moralist, and He says, 'No! Not *do*; but *trust*.' In so far as that is act, it is the only act that you need.

That is evidently reasonable. The man is more than his work; motive is more important than action; character is deeper than conduct. God is pleased, not by what men do, but by what men are. We must *be* first, and then we shall *do*. And it is obviously reasonable, because we can find analogies to the requirement in all other relations of life. What would you care for a child that scrupulously obeyed, and did not love or trust? What would a prince think of a subject who was ostentatious in acts of loyalty, and all the while was plotting and nurturing treason in his heart?

If doing separate acts of righteousness be the way to work the works of God, then no man has ever done them. For it is a plain fact that every man falls below his own conscience — which conscience is less scrupulous than the divine law. The worst of us knows a great deal more than the best of us does; and our lives, universally, are, at the best, lives of partial effort after unreachd attainments of obedience and of virtue.

But, even supposing that we could perform, far more completely than we do, the requirements of our own consciences, and conform to the evident duties of our position and relations, do you think that without faith we should be therein working the works of God?

Suppose a man were able fully to realise his own ideal of goodness, without any confidence in God underlying all his acts; do you think that these would be acts that would please God? It seems to me that, however lovely and worthy of admiration, looked at with human eyes only, many lives are, which have nobly and resolutely fought against evil, and struggled after good, if they have lacked the crowning grace of doing this for God's sake, they lack, I was going to say, almost everything; I will not say that, but I will say that they lack that which makes them acceptable, well-pleasing to Him. The poorest, the most imperfect realisation of our duty and ideal of conduct which has in it a love towards God and a faith in Him that would fain do better if it could, is a nobler thing, I venture to say, in the eyes of Heaven—which are the truth-seeing eyes—than the noblest achievements of an untrusting soul. It does not seem to me that to say so is bigotry or narrowness or anything else but the plain deduction from this, that a man's relation to God is the deepest thing about him, and that if that be right, other things will come right, and if that be wrong nothing is as right as it might be.

Here we have Jesus Christ laying the foundation for the doctrine which is often said to be Pauline, as if that meant something else than coming from Jesus Christ. We often hear people say, 'Oh, your evangelical teaching of justification by faith, and all that, comes out of Paul's Epistles, not out of Christ's teaching, nor out of John's Gospel.' Well, there is a difference, which it is blindness not to recognise, between the seeds of teaching in our Lord's words, and the flowers and fruit of these seeds, which we get in the more systematised and developed teaching of the Epistles. I

frankly admit that, and I should expect it, with my belief as to who Christ is, and who Paul is. But in that saying, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent,' is the germ of everything that Paul has taught us about the works of the law being of no avail, and faith being alone and unfailing in its power of uniting men to God, and bringing them into the possession of eternal life. The saying stands in John's Gospel, and so Paul and John alike received, though in different fashions, and wrought out on different lines of subsequent teaching, the germinal impulse from these words of the Master. Let us hear no more about salvation by faith being a Pauline addition to Christ's Gospel, for the lips of Christ Himself have declared 'this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

III. Thirdly, this faith is the productive parent of all separate works of God.

The teaching that I have been trying to enforce has, I know, been so presented as to make a pillow for indolence, and to be closely allied to immorality. It has been so presented, but it has not been so presented half as often as its enemies would have us believe. For I know of but very few, and those by no means the most prominent and powerful of the preachers of the great doctrine of salvation by faith, who have not added, as its greatest teacher did: 'Let ours also be careful to maintain good works for necessary uses.' But the true teaching is not that trust is a substitute for work, but that it is the foundation of work. The Gospel is, first of all, Trust; then, Set yourselves to do the works of faith. It works by love, it is the opening of the heart to the entrance of the life of Christ, and, of course, when that life comes in, it will act in the man

in a manner appropriate to its origin and source, and he that by faith has been joined to Jesus Christ, and has opened his heart to receive into that heart the life of Christ, will, as a matter of course, bring forth, in the measure of his faith, the fruits of righteousness.

We are surely not despising fruits and flowers when we insist upon the root from which they shall come. A man may take separate acts of partial goodness, as you see children in the springtime sticking daisies on the spikes of a thorn-twigg picked from the hedges. But these will die. The basis of all righteousness is faith, and the manifestation of faith is practical righteousness. 'Show Me thy faith by thy works' is Christ's teaching quite as much as it is the teaching of His sturdy servant James. And so, dear friends, we are going the shortest way to enrich lives with all the beauties of possible human perfection when we say, 'Begin at the beginning. The longest way round is the shortest way home; trust Him with all your hearts first, and that will effloresce into "whatsoever things are lovely and whatever things are of good report."' In the beautiful metaphor of the Apostle Peter, in his second Epistle, Faith is the damsel who leads in the chorus of consequent graces; and we are exhorted to 'add to our faith virtue,' and all the others that unfold themselves in harmonious sequence from that one central source.

If I had time I should be glad to turn for a moment to the light which such considerations cast upon subjects that are largely occupying the attention of the Christian Church to-day. I should like to insist that, before you talk much about applied Christianity, you should be very sure that in men there is a Christianity to apply. I venture to profess my own humble belief that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, Christian

ministers and churches will do no more for the social, political, and intellectual and moral advancement of men and the elevation of the people by sticking to their own work and preaching this Gospel—‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.’

IV. Lastly, this faith secures the bread of life.

The bread of life is the starting-point of the whole conversation. In the widest possible sense it is whatsoever truly stills the hunger of the immortal soul. In a deeper sense it is the person of Jesus Christ Himself, for He not only says that He will *give*, but that He *is* the Bread of Life. And, in the deepest sense of all, it is His flesh broken for us in His sacrifice on the Cross. That bread is a gift. So the paradox results which stands in our text—*work* for the bread which God will *give*. If it be a gift, that fact determines what sort of work must be done in order to possess it. If it be a gift, then the only work is to accept it. If it be a gift, then we are out of the region of *quid pro quo*; and have not to bring, as Chinese do, great strings of copper cash that, all added up together, do not amount to a shilling, in order to buy what God will bestow upon us. If it be a gift, then to trust the Giver and to accept the gift is the only condition that is possible.

It is not a condition that God has invented and arbitrarily imposed. The necessity of it is lodged deep in the very nature of the case. Air cannot get to the lungs of a mouse in an air-pump. Light cannot come into a room where all the shutters are up and the keyhole stopped. If a man chooses to perch himself on some little stool of his own, with glass legs to it, and to take away his hand from the conductor,

no electricity will come to him. If I choose to lock my lips, Jesus Christ does not prise open my clenched teeth to put the bread of life into my unwilling mouth. If we ask, we get; if we take, we get.

And so the paradox comes, that we work for a gift, with a work which is not work because it is a departure from myself. It is the same blessed paradox which the prophet spoke when he said, 'Buy . . . without money and without price.' Oh! what a burden of hopeless effort and weary toil—like that of the man that had to roll the stone up the hill, which ever slipped back again—is lifted from our shoulders by such a word as this that I have been poorly trying to speak about now! 'Thou art careful and troubled about many things,' poor soul! trying to be good; trying to fight yourself, and the world, and the devil. Try the other plan, and listen to Him saying, 'Give up self-imposed effort in thine own strength. Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you.'

THE MANNA

'I am that bread of life. 49. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.'—JOHN vi. 48-50.

'THIS is of a truth that Prophet,' said the Jews, when Christ had fed the five thousand on the five barley loaves and the two small fishes. That was the kind of Teacher for them; they were quite unaffected by the wisdom of His words and the beauty of His deeds, but a miracle that found food precisely met their wants, and so there was excited an impure enthusiasm, very unwelcome to Jesus. Therefore He withdrew Himself from it, and when the people followed Him, all full of

expectation, to get some more loaves and see some more miracles, He met them with a douche of cold water that cooled their enthusiasm and flung them back into a critical, questioning mood. They pointed to the miracle of the manna, and hinted that, if He expected them to accept Him, He must do as Moses had done, or something like it. Probably there was a Jewish tradition in existence then to the effect that the Messiah was to repeat the miracle of the manna. But, at all events, Christ lays hold of the reference that they put into His hands, and He said in effect, 'Manna? Yes; I give, and am, the true Manna.'

So this is the third of the instances in this Gospel in which our Lord pointed to Old Testament incidents and institutions as symbolising Himself. In the first of them, when He likened Himself to the ladder that Jacob saw, He claimed to be the Medium of communication between heaven and earth. In the second of them, when He likened Himself to the brazen serpent lifted in the camp, He claimed to be the Healer of a sin-stricken and poisoned world. And now, with an allusion both to the miracle and to the Jewish demand for the repetition of the manna sign, He claims to be the true Food for a starving world. So there are three things in my text: Christ's claim, His requirements, and His promise; the bread, the eating, the issues.

I. Here is a claim of Christ's.

As I have already said, in the whole wonderful conversation of which I have selected a portion for my text, there is a double reference to the miracle of the loaves and of the manna. What our Lord means to assert for Himself is that which is common to both of these—viz. that He supplies the great primal wants of humanity, the hunger of the heart. There may be

another reference also, which I just notice without dwelling upon it. Barley loaves were the coarsest and least valuable form of bread. They were not only of little worth, but altogether inadequate to feeding the five thousand. The palates, unaccustomed to the stinging savours of the garlic and the leeks of Egypt, loathed the light bread. And so Jesus Christ comes into the world in lowly form, like the barley loaf or the light bread from which men whose tastes have been vitiated by the piquant savours of more earthly nourishment turn away as insipid. And yet He in His lowliness, He in His savourlessness, is that which meets the deepest wants of humanity, and is every man's fare because He will be any man's satisfaction.

But I wish to bring before your notice the wonderful way in which our Lord, in this great dissertation concerning Himself as the Bread of Life, gradually unfolds the depths of His meaning and of His offer. He began with saying that He, the Son of Man, will give to men the bread that 'endures to everlasting life.' And then when that saying is but dimly understood, and yet awakes some strange new desires and appetites in the hearers, and they come to Him and ask, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread,' He answers them with opening another finger of His hand, as it were, and showing them a little more of the treasure that lies in His palm. For He says, '*I am* that Bread of Life.' That is an advance on the previous saying. He gives bread, and any man that was conscious of possessing some great truth or some great blessing which, believed and accepted, would refresh and nourish humanity, might have said the same thing. But now we pass into the *penumbra* of a greater mystery: '*I am* that Bread of Life.' You cannot separate what Christ gives from

what Christ is. You can take the truths that another man proclaims, altogether irrespective of him and his personality. That only disturbs, and the sooner it is got rid of, the firmer and the purer our possession of the message for which he is only the medium. You can take Plato's teaching and do as you like with Plato. But you cannot take Christ's teaching and do as you like with Christ. His personality is the centre of His gift to the world. 'I am that Bread of Life.' That He should give it is much; that He should *be* it is far more.

And notice how, when He has thus drawn us a little further into the magic circle of the light, He not only asserts the inseparableness of His gift from His Person, but also asserts, with a reference, no doubt, to the manna, 'I am the Bread that came down from heaven.' The listeners immediately laid hold of that one point, and neglected for the moment all the rest, and they fixed with a true instinct—although it was for the purpose of contradicting it—on this central point, 'that came down from heaven.' They said one to the other, 'How can this man say that He came down from heaven? Is not this Jesus the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?' So, brethren, as the manna that descended from above in the dew of the night was to the bread that was baked in a baker's oven, so is the Christ to the manhood that has its origin in the natural processes of birth. The Incarnation of the Son of God, becoming Son of Man for us and for our salvation, is involved in this great claim. You do not get to the heart of Christ's message unless you have accepted this as the truth concerning Him, that 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' and that at a definite point in

the long process of the ages, 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us.' He will never be 'the Bread of Life' unless He is 'the Bread that came down from heaven.' For humanity needs that the blue heavens that bend remote above should come down; and we cannot be lifted 'out of the horrible pit and the miry clay' unless a Hand from above be reached down into the depths of our degradation, and lift us from our lowness. Heaven must come to earth, if earth is to rise to heaven. The ladder must be let down from above, if ever from the lower levels men are to ascend thither where at the summit the face of God can be seen.

But that is not all. Our Lord, if I may recur to a former figure, went on to open another finger of His hand, and to show still more of the gift. For He not only said, 'the Son of Man gives the bread,' and 'I am the Bread that came down from heaven,' but He went on to say, in a subsequent stage of the conversation, 'the Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Now, notice that '*will* give.' Then, though the Word was made flesh, and the manna came down from heaven, the especial gift of His flesh for the life of the world was, at the time of His speaking, a future thing. And what He meant is still more clearly brought out, when we read other words which are the very climax of this conversation, when He declares that the condition of our having life in ourselves is our 'eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man.' The figure is made repulsive on purpose, in order that it may provoke us to penetrate to its meaning. It was even more repulsive to the Jew, with his religious horror of touching or tasting anything in which the blood was. And yet

our Lord not only speaks of Himself as the Bread, but of His flesh and blood as being the Food of the world. The separation of the two clearly indicates a violent death, and I, for my part, have no manner of doubt that, in these great words in which our Lord lays bare the deepest foundations of His claim to be the Food of humanity, there is couched, in the veiled language which was necessary at the then stage of His mission, a distinct reference to His death, as being the Sacrifice on which a hunger-stricken world may feed and be satisfied.

So here we have, in three steps, the great central truth of the Gospel set forth in symbolical aspect: the Son that gives, the Son that is, the Bread of the world, and the death whereby His flesh and blood are separated and become the nourishment of all sin-stricken souls. I do not say one word to enforce these claims, but I beseech you deal fairly with these Gospel narratives, and do not go on picking out of them bits of Christ's actions or words, which commend themselves to you, and ignoring all the rest. There is no more reason to believe that Jesus Christ ever said, 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them likewise,' or any other part of that Sermon on the Mount which some people take as their Christianity, than there is to believe that He said, 'The bread which I give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Believe it or not, it is not dealing with the Scripture records as you deal with other historical records if, for subjective reasons, you brush aside all that department of our Lord's teaching. And if you do accept it, what becomes of His 'sweet reasonableness'? What becomes of His meekness and lowliness of heart? I was going to say what becomes

of His sanity, that He should stand up, a youngish man from Nazareth, in the synagogue of Capernaum, and should say, 'I, heaven-descended, and slain by men, am the Bread of Life to the whole world'?

I was going to make another observation, which I must just pass with the slightest notice, and that is that, taking this point of view and giving full weight to these three stages of our Lord's progressive revelation of Himself, we have the answer to the question, What is the connection between these discourses and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? Our modern sacramentarian friends will have it that Jesus Christ is speaking of the Communion in this chapter. I take it, and I venture to think it the reasonable explanation, that He is not speaking about the Communion, but that this discourse and that rite are dealing with the same truths—the one in articulate words, the other in equivalent symbols. And so we have not to read into the text any allusion to the rite, but to see in the text and in the rite the proclamation of the same thing—viz. that the flesh and the blood of the Sacrifice for sins is the food on which a sinful and cleansed world may feed.

II. So, secondly, let me ask you to note our Lord's requirement here.

He carries on the metaphor. 'This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.' The eating necessarily follows from the symbol of the bread, as the designation of the way by which we all, with our hungry hearts, may feed upon this Bread of God. I need not remind you that in many a place, and in this whole context, we find the explanation of the symbol very plainly. In another part of this conversation we read, under another

metaphor which comes to the same thing, 'He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.' So the eating and the coming are diverse symbols for the one thing, the believing. When a man eats he appropriates to himself, and incorporates into his very being, the food of which he partakes. And when a man trusts Christ he appropriates to himself, and incorporates into his inmost being, the very life of Jesus Christ. You say, 'That is mysticism'; but it is the New Testament teaching, that when I trust Christ I get more than His gifts—I get Himself; that when my faith goes out to Him it not only rests me on Him, but it brings Him into me, and that food of the spirit becomes the life, as we shall see, of *my* spirit.

That condition is indispensable. It is useless to have food on your table or your plate or in your hand, it does not nourish you there: you must eat it, and then you gain sustenance from it. Many a hungry man has died at the door of a granary. Some of us are starving, though beside us there is 'the Bread of God that came down from heaven.' Brethren, you must eat, and I venture to put the question to you—*not* Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the world's Saviour? *not* Do you believe in an Incarnation? *not* Do you believe in an Atonement? but Have you claimed your portion in the Bread? Have you taken it into your own lips? *Crede et manducasti*, said Augustine, 'believe'—or, rather, *trust*—'and thou hast eaten.' Have you?

Further, let me remind you that under this eating is included not only some initial act of faith, but a continuous course of partaking. The dinner you ate this

day last year is of no use for to-day's hunger. The act of faith done long ago will not bring the Bread to nourish you now. You must repeat the meal. And very strikingly and beautifully in the last part of this conversation our Lord varies the word for eating, and substitutes—as if He were speaking to those who had fulfilled the previous condition—another one which implies the ruminant action of certain animals. And that is what Christian men have to do, to feed over and over and over again on the 'Bread of God which came down from heaven.' Christ, and especially in and through His death for us, can nourish and sustain our wills, giving them the pattern of what they should desire, and the motive for which they should desire it. Christ, and especially through His death, can feed our consciences, and take away from them all the painful sense of guilt, while He sharpens them to a far keener sensitiveness to evil. Christ, and especially through His death, can feed our understandings, and unveil therein the deepest truths concerning God and man, concerning man's destiny and God's mercy. Christ, and especially in His death, can feed our affections, and minister to love and desire and submission and hope their celestial nourishment. He is 'the Bread of God,' and we have but to eat of that which is laid before us.

III. So, lastly, we have here the issues.

'Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.' This Bread secures that if 'a man eat thereof he shall not die.' The bread that perishes feeds a life that perishes; but this Bread not only sustains but creates a life that cannot perish, and, taken into the spirits of men that are 'dead in trespasses and sins.'

imparts to them a life that has no affinity to evil, and therefore no dread of extinction.

If 'a man eats thereof he shall not die.' Christ annihilates for us the mere accident of physical death. That is only a momentary jolt on the course. That may all be crammed into a parenthesis. 'He shall not die,' but live the true life which comes from the possession of union with Him who is the Life. The bread which we eat sustains life; the Bread which He gives originates it. The bread which we eat is assimilated to our bodily frame, the Bread which He gives assimilates our spiritual nature to His. And so it comes to be the only food that stills a hungry heart, the only food that satisfies and yet never cloy, which, eating, we are filled, and being filled are made capable of more, and, being capable of more, receive more. In blessed and eternal alternation, fruition and desire, satisfaction and appetite, go on.

'Why do ye spend money for that which is not bread?' You cannot answer the question with any reasonable answer. Oh, dear friends! I beseech you, listen to that Lord who is saying to each of us, 'Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you.'

ONE SAYING WITH TWO MEANINGS

'Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me. 34. Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.'—JOHN vii. 33, 34.

'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.'—JOHN xiii. 33.

No greater contrast can be conceived than that between these two groups to whom such singularly similar words were addressed. The one consists of the officers, tools of the Pharisees and of the priests, who had been sent to seize Christ, and would fain have carried out their masters' commission, but were restrained by a strange awe, inexplicable even to themselves. The other consists of the little company of His faithful, though slow, scholars, who made a great many mistakes, and sometimes all but tired out even His patience, and yet were forgiven much because they loved much. Hatred animated one group, loving sorrow the other.

Christ speaks to them both in nearly the same words, but with what a different tone, meaning, and application! To the officers the saying is an exhibition of His triumphant confidence that their malice is impotent and their arms paralysed; that when He wills He will go, not be dragged by them or any man, but go to a safe asylum, where foes can neither find nor follow. The officers do not understand what He means. They think that, bad Jew as they have always believed Him to be, He may very possibly consummate His apostasy by going over to the Gentiles altogether; but, at any rate, they feel that He is to escape their hands.

The disciples understand little more as to whither

He goes, as they themselves confess a moment after; but they gather from His words His loving pity, and though the upper side of the saying seems to be menacing and full of separation, there is an under side that suggests the possibility of a reunion for them.

The words are nearly the same in both cases, but they are not absolutely identical. There are significant omissions and additions in the second form of them. 'Little children' is the tenderest of all the names that ever came from Christ's lips to His disciples, and never was heard on His lips except on this one occasion, for parting words ought to be very loving words. 'A little while I am with you,' but He does not say, 'And then I go to Him that sent Me.' 'Ye shall seek Me,' but He does not say, 'And shall not find Me.' 'As I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you,' that little word 'now' makes the announcement a truth for the present only. His disciples shall not seek Him in vain, but when they seek they shall find. And though for a moment they be parted from Him, it is with the prospect and the confidence of reunion. Let us, then, look at the two main thoughts here. First, the two 'seekings,' the seeking which is vain, and the seeking which is never vain; and the two 'cannots,' the inability of His enemies for evermore to come where He is, and the inability of His friends, for a little season, to come where He is.

I. The two seekings.

As I have observed, there is a very significant omission in one of the forms of the words. The enemies are told that they will never find Him, but no such dark words are spoken to the friends. So, then, hostile seeking of the Christ is in vain, and loving seeking of Him by His friends, though they understand Him but very

poorly, and therefore seek Him that they may know Him better, is always answered and over-answered.

Let me deal just for a moment or two with each of these. In their simplest use the words of my first text merely mean this: 'You cannot touch Me, I am passing into a safe asylum where your hands can never reach Me.'

We may generalise that for a moment, though it does not lie directly in our path, and preach the old blessed truth that no man with hostile intent seeking for Christ in His person, in His Gospel, or in His followers and friends, can ever find Him. All the antagonism that has stormed against Him and His cause and words, and His followers and lovers, has been impotent and vain. The pursuers are like dogs chasing a bird, sniffing along the ground after their prey, which all the while sits out of their reach on a bough, and carols to the sky. As in the days of His flesh, His foes could not touch His person till He chose, and vainly sought Him when it pleased Him to hide from them, so ever since, in regard to His cause, and in regard to all hearts that love Him, no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper. They shall be wrapped, when need be, in a cloud of protecting darkness, and stand safe within its shelter. Take good cheer, all you that are trying to do anything, however little, however secular it may appear to be, for the good and well-being of your fellows! All such service is a prolongation of Christ's work, and an effluence from His, if there be any good in it at all; and it is immortal and safe, as is His. 'Ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me.'

But then, besides that, there is another thought. It is not merely hostile seeking of Him that is hopeless

and vain. When the dark days came over Israel, under the growing pressure of the Roman yoke, and amidst the agonies of that last siege, and the unutterable sufferings which all but annihilated the nation, do you not think that there were many of these people who said to themselves: 'Ah! if we had only that Jesus of Nazareth back with us for a day or two; if we had only listened to Him!' Do you not think that before Israel dissolved in blood there were many of those who had stood hostile or alienated, who desired to see 'one of the days of the Son of Man,' and did not see it? They sought Him, not in anger any more; they sought Him, not in penitence, or else they would have found Him; but they sought Him simply in distress, and wishing that they could have back again what they had cared so little for when they had it.

And are there no people listening to me now, to whom these words apply?—

'He that will not, when he may,
When he will it shall be—Nay!'

Although it is (blessed be His name) always true that a seeking heart finds Him, and whensoever there is the faintest trace of penitent desire to get hold of Christ's hand it does grasp ours, it is also true that things neglected once cannot be brought back; that the sowing time allowed to pass can never return; and that they who have turned, as some of you have turned, dear friends, all your lives, a deaf ear to the Christ that asks you to love Him and trust Him, may one day wish that it had been otherwise, and go to look for Him and not find Him.

There is another kind of seeking that is vain, an intellectual seeking without the preparation of the

heart. There are, no doubt, some people here to-day that would say, 'We have been seeking the truth about religion all our lives, and we have not got to it yet.' Well, I do not want to judge either your motives or your methods, but I know this, that there is many a man who goes on the quest for religious certainty, and looks at, if not for Jesus Christ, and is not really capable of discerning Him when he sees Him, because his eye is not single, or because his heart is full of worldliness or indifference, or because he begins with a foregone conclusion, and looks for facts to establish that; or because he will not cast down and put away evil things that rise up between him and his Master.

My brother! if you go to look for Jesus Christ with a heart full of the world, if you go to look for Him while you wish to hold on by all the habitudes and earthlinesses of your past, you will never find Him. The sensualist seeks for Him, the covetous man seeks for Him, the passionate, ill-tempered man seeks for Him; the woman plunged in frivolities, or steeped to the eyebrows in domestic cares,—these may in some feeble fashion go to look for Him and they will not find Him, because they have sought for Him with hearts overcharged with other things and filled with the affairs of this life, its trifles and its sins.

I turn for a moment to the seeking that is not vain. 'Ye shall seek Me' is not on Christ's lips to any heart that loves Him, however imperfectly, a sentence of separation or an appointment of a sorrowful lot, but it is a blessed law, the law of the Christian life.

That life is all one great seeking after Christ. Love seeks the absent when removed from our sight. If we care anything about Him at all, our hearts will turn to Him as naturally as, when the winter begins to

pinch, the migrating birds seek the sunny south, impelled by an instinct that they do not themselves understand.

The same law which sends loving thoughts out across the globe to seek for husband, child, or friend when absent, sets the really Christian heart seeking for the Christ, whom, having not seen, it loves, as surely as the ivy tendril feels out for a support. As surely as the roots of a mountain-ash growing on the top of a boulder feel down the side of the rock till they reach the soil; as surely as the stork follows the warmth to the sunny Mediterranean, so surely, if your heart loves Christ, will the very heart and motive of your action be the search for Him.

And if you do *not* seek Him, brother, as surely as He is parted from our sense you will lose Him, and He will be parted from you wholly, for there is no way by which a person who is not before our eyes may be kept near us except only by diligent effort on our part to keep thought and love and will all in contact with Him; thought meditating, love going out towards Him, will submitting. Unless there be this effort, you will lose your Master as surely as a little child in a crowd will lose his nurse and his guide, if his hand slips from out the protecting hand. The dark shadow of the earth on which you stand will slowly steal over His silvery brightness, as when the moon is eclipsed, and you will not know how you have lost Him, but only be sadly aware that your heaven is darkened. 'Ye shall seek Me,' is the condition of all happy communion between Christ and us.

And that seeking, dear brother, in the threefold form in which I have spoken of it—effort to keep Him in our thoughts, in our love, and over our will—is

neither a seeking which starts from a sense that we do not possess Him, nor one which ends in disappointment. But we seek for Him because we already have Him in a measure, and we seek Him that we may possess Him more abundantly, and anything is possible rather than that such a search shall be vain. Men may go to created wells, and find no water, and return ashamed, and with their vessels empty, but every one who seeks for that Fountain of salvation shall draw from it with joy. It is as impossible that a heart which desires Jesus Christ shall not have Him, as it is that lungs dilated shall not fill with air, or as it is that an empty vessel put out in a rainfall shall not be replenished. He does not hide Himself, but He desires to be found. May I say that as a mother will sometimes pretend to her child to hide, that the child's delight may be the greater in searching and in finding, so Christ has gone away from our sight in order, for one reason, that He may stimulate our desires to feel after Him! If we seek Him hid in God, we shall find Him for the joy of our hearts.

A great thinker once said that he would rather have the search after truth than the possession of truth. It was a rash word, but it pointed to the fact that there is a search which is only one shade less blessed than the possession. And if that be so in regard to any pure and high truth, it is still more so about Christ Himself. To seek for Him is joy; to find Him is joy. What can be a happier life than the life of constant pursuit after an infinitely precious object, which is ever being sought and ever being found; sought with a profound consciousness of its preciousness, found with a widening appreciation and capacity for its enjoyment? 'Ye shall seek Me' is a word not of evil but of good cheer;

for buried in the depth of the commandment to search is the promise that we shall find.

II. Secondly, let us look briefly at these two 'cannots.'

'Whither I go, ye cannot come,' says He to His enemies, with no limitation, with no condition. The 'cannot' is absolute and permanent, so long as they retain their enmity. To His friends, on the other hand, He says, 'So *now* I say to you,' the law for to-day, the law for this side the flood, but not the law for the beyond, as He explains more fully in the subsequent words: 'Thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.'

So, then, Christ is *somewhere*. When He passed from life it was not into a state only, but into a place; and He took with Him a material body, howsoever changed. He is somewhere, and there friend and enemy alike cannot enter, so long as they are compassed with 'the earthly house of this tabernacle.' But the incapacity is deeper than that. No sinful man can pass thither. Where has He gone? The preceding words give us the answer. 'God shall glorify Him in Himself.' The prospect of that assumption into the inmost glory of the divine nature directly led our Lord to think of the change it would bring about in the relation of His humble friends to Him. While for Himself He triumphs in the prospect, He cannot but turn a thought to their lonesomeness, and hence come the words of our text. He has passed into the bosom and blaze of divinity. Can I walk there, can I pass into that tremendous fiery furnace? 'Who shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?' 'Ye cannot follow Me now.' No man can go thither except Christ goes thither.

There are deep mysteries lying in that word of our Lord's,—'I go to prepare a place for you.' We know

not what manner of activity on His part that definitely means. It seems as if somehow or other the presence in Heaven of our Brother in His glorified humanity was necessary in order that the golden pavement should be trodden by our feet, and that our poor, feeble manhood should live and not be shrivelled up in the blaze of that central brightness.

We know not how He prepares the place, but heaven, whatever it be, is no place for a man unless the Man, Christ Jesus, be there. He is the Revealer of God, not only for earth, but for heaven; not only for time, but for eternity. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,' is true everywhere and always, there as here. So I suppose that, but for His presence, heaven itself would be dark, and its King invisible, and if a man could enter there he would either be blasted with unbearable flashes of brightness or grope at its noon-day as the blind, because his eye was not adapted to such beams. Be that as it may, 'the Forerunner is for us entered.' He has gone before, because He knows the great City, 'His own calm home, His habitation from eternity.' He has gone before to make ready a lodging for us, in whose land He has dwelt so long, and He will meet us, who would else be bewildered like some dweller in a desert if brought to the capital, when we reach the gates, and guide our unaccustomed steps to the mansion prepared for us.

But the power to enter there, even when He is there, depends on our union with Christ by faith. When we are joined to Him, the absolute 'cannot,' based upon flesh, and still more upon sin, which is a radical and permanent impossibility, is changed into a relative and temporary incapacity. If we have faith in Christ, and are thereby drawing a kindred life from Him, our

nature will be in process of being changed into that which is capable of bearing the brilliance of the felicities of heaven. But just as these friends of Christ, though they loved Him very truly, and understood Him a little, were a long way from being ready to follow Him, and needed the schooling of the Cross, and Olivet, and Pentecost, as well as the discipline of life and toil, before they were fully ripe for the harvest, so we, for the most part, have to pass through analogous training before we are prepared for the place which Christ has prepared for us. Certainly, so soon as a heart has trusted Christ, it is capable of entering where He is, and the real reason why the disciples could not come where He went was that they did not yet clearly know Him as the divine Sacrifice for theirs and the world's sins, and, however much they believed in Him as Messiah, had not yet, nor could have, the knowledge on which they could found their trust in Him as their Saviour.

But, while that is true, it is also true that each advance in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour will bring with it capacity to advance further into the heart of the far-off land, and to see more of the King in His beauty. So, as long as His friends were wrapped in such dark clouds of misconception and error, as long as their Christian characters were so imperfect and incomplete as they were at the time of my text being spoken, they could not go thither and follow Him. But it was a diminishing impossibility, and day by day they approximated more and more to His likeness, because they understood Him more, and trusted Him more, and loved Him more, and grew towards Him, and, therefore, day by day became more and more able to enter into that Kingdom.

Are you growing in power so to do? Is the only thing which unfits you for heaven the fact that you have a mortal body? In other respects are you fit to go into that heaven, and walk in its brightness and not be consumed? The answer to the question is found in another one—Are you joined to Jesus Christ by simple faith? The incapacity is absolute and eternal if the enmity is eternal.

State and place are determined yonder by character, and character is determined by faith. Take a bottle of some solution in which heterogeneous substances have all been melted up together, and let it stand on a shelf and gradually settle down, and its contents will settle in regular layers, the heaviest at the bottom and the lightest at the top, and stratify themselves according to gravity. And that is how the other world is arranged—stratified. When all the confusions of this present are at an end, and all the moisture is driven off, men and women will be left in layers, like drawing to like. As Peter said about Judas with equal wisdom and reticence, 'He went to his own place.' That is where we shall all go, to the place we are fit for.

God does not slam the door of heaven in anybody's face; it stands wide open. But there is a mystic barrier, unseen, but most real, more repellent than cherub and flaming sword, which makes it impossible for any foot to cross that threshold except the foot of the man whose heart and nature have been made Christlike, and fitted for heaven by simple faith in Him.

Love Him and trust Him, and then your life on earth will be a blessed seeking and a blessed finding of Him whom to seek is joyous effort, whom to find is an Elysium of rest. You will walk here not parted from

Him, but with your thoughts and your love, which are your truest self, going up where He is, until you drop 'the muddy vesture of decay' which unfits you whilst you wear it for the presence-chamber of the King, and so you will enter in and be 'for ever with the Lord.'

THE ROCK AND THE WATER

'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. 38. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'—JOHN vii. 37, 38.

THE occasion and date of this great saying are carefully given by the Evangelist, because they throw much light on its significance and importance. It was 'on the last day, that great day of the Feast,' that 'Jesus stood and cried.' The Feast was that of Tabernacles, which was instituted in order to keep in mind the incidents of the desert wandering. On the anniversary of this day the Jews still do as they used to, and in many a foul ghetto and frowsy back street of European cities, you will find them sitting beneath the booths of green branches, commemorating the Exodus and its wonders. Part of that ceremonial was that on each morning of the seven, and possibly on the eighth, 'the last day of the Feast,' a procession of white-robed priests wound down the rocky footpath from the Temple to Siloam, and there in a golden vase drew water from the spring, chanting, as they ascended and re-entered the Temple gates where they poured out the water as a libation, the words of the prophet, 'with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'

Picture the scene to yourselves—the white-robed priests toiling up the pathway, the crowd in the court,

the sparkling water poured out with choral song. And then, as the priests stood with their empty vases, there was a little stir in the crowd, and a Man who had been standing watching, lifted up a loud voice and cried, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto *Me*, and drink.' Strange words to say, anywhere and anywhen, daring words to say there in the Temple court! For there and then they could mean nothing less than Christ's laying His hand on that old miracle, which was pointed to by the rite, when the rock yielded the water, and asserting that all which it did and typified was repeated, fulfilled, and transcended in Himself, and that not for a handful of nomads in the wilderness, but for all the world, in all its generations.

So here is one more instance to add to those to which I have directed your attention on former occasions, in which, in this Gospel, we find Christ claiming to be the fulfilment of incidents and events in that ancient covenant, Jacob's ladder, the brazen serpent, the manna, and now the rock that yielded the water. He says of them all that they are the shadow, and the substance is in Him.

I. So then, we have to look, first, at Christ's view of humanity as set forth here.

You remember the story of how the people in the wilderness, distressed by that most imperative of all physical cravings, thirst, turned upon Moses and Aaron and said, 'Why have ye brought us here to die in the wilderness, where there are neither vines nor pomegranates,' but a land of thirst and death? Just as Christ, in the former instances to which we have already referred, selected and pointed to the poisoned and serpent-stricken camp as an emblem of humanity, and just as He pointed to the hunger of

the men that were starving there, as an emblem, so here He says: 'That is the world—a congregation of thirsty men raging in their pangs, and not knowing where to find solace or slaking for their thirst.' I do not need to go over all the dominant desires that surge up in men's souls, the mind craving for knowledge, the heart calling out for love, the whole nature feeling blindly and often desperately after something external to itself, which it can grasp, and in which it can feel satisfied. You know them; we all know them. Like some plant growing in a cellar, and with feeble and blanched tendrils feeling towards the light which is so far away, every man carries about within himself a whole host of longing desires, which need to find something round which they may twine, and in which they can be at rest.

The misery of man is great upon him,' because, having these desires, he misreads so many of them, and stifles, ignores, atrophies to so large an extent the noblest of them. I know of no sadder tragedy than the way in which we misinterpret the meaning of these inarticulate cries that rise from the depths of our hearts, and misunderstand what it is that we are groping after, when we put out empty, and, alas! too often unclean, hands, to lay hold on our true good.

Brethren, you do not know what you want, many of you, and there is something pathetic in the endless effort to fill up the heart by a multitude of diverse and small things, when all the while the deepest meaning of aspirations, yearnings, longings, unrest, discontent is, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' Nothing less than infinitude will satisfy the smallest heart of the humblest and least developed man. Nothing less than to have all our treasures in

one accessible, changeless Infinity will ever give rest to a human soul. You have tried a multiplicity of trifles. It takes a great many bags of coppers to make up £1000, and they are cumbrous to carry. Would it not be better to part with a multitude of goodly pearls, if need be, in order to have all your wealth, and the satisfaction of all your desires, in the 'One Pearl of great price'? It is God for whom men are thirsting, and, alas! so many of us know it not. As the old prophet says, in words that never lose their pathetic power, 'they have hewn out for themselves cisterns'—one is not enough—they need many. They are only cisterns, which hold what is put into them, and they are 'broken cisterns,' which cannot hold it. Yet we turn to these with a strange infatuation, which even the experience that teaches fools does not teach us to be folly. We turn to these; and we turn *from* the Fountain; the one, the springing, the sufficient, the unfailing, the exuberant Fountain of living waters. Some of you have cisterns on the tops of your houses, with a coating of green scum and soot on them, and do you like that foul draught better than the bright blessing that comes out of the heart of the rock, flashing and pure?

But not only are these desires misread, but the noblest of them are stifled. I have said that the condition of humanity is that of thirst. Christ speaks in my text as if that thirst was by no means universal, and, alas! it is not, '*If any man thirst*'; there are some of us that do not, for we are all so constituted that, unless by continual self-discipline, and self-suppression, and self-evolution, the lower desires will overgrow the loftier ones, and kill them, as weeds will some precious crop. And some of you are so much

taken up with gratifying the lowest necessities and longings of your nature, that you leave the highest all uncared for, and the effect of that is that the unsatisfied longing avenges itself, for your neglect of it, by infusing unrest and dissatisfaction into what else would satisfy the lowest. 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase,' but he that loves God will be satisfied with less than silver, and will continue satisfied when decrease comes. If you would suck the last drop of sweetness out of the luscious purple grapes that grow on earth, you must have the appetite after the best things, recognised, and ministered to, and satisfied. And when we are satisfied with God, we shall 'have learnt in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be self-sufficing.' But, as I say, the highest desires are neglected, and the lowest are cockered and pampered, and so the taste is depraved. Many of you have no wish for God, and no desire after high and noble things, and are perfectly contented to browse on the low levels, or to feed on 'the husks that the swine do eat,' whilst all the while the loftiest of your powers is starving within. Brethren, before we can come to the Rock that yields the water, there must be the sense of need. Do you know what it is that you want? Have you any desire after righteousness and purity and nobleness, and the vision of God flaming in upon the pettinesses and commonplaces of this life which is 'sound and fury, signifying nothing,' and is trivial in all its pretended greatness, unless you have learned that you need God most of all, and will never be at rest till you have Him?

II. Secondly, note here Christ's consciousness of Himself.

Is there anything in human utterances more majestic and wonderful than this saying of my text, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me'? There He claims to be separate altogether from those whose thirst He would satisfy. There He claims to be able to meet every aspiration, every spiritual want, every true desire in this complex nature of ours. There He claims to be able to do this for one, and therefore for all. There He claims to be able to do it for all the generations of mankind, right away down to the end. Who is He who thus plants Himself in the front of the race, knows their deep thirsts, takes account of the impotence of anything created to satisfy them, assumes the divine prerogative, and says, 'I come to satisfy every desire in every soul, to the end of time'? Yes, and from that day when He stood in the Temple and cried these words, down to this day, there have been, and there are, millions who can say, 'We have drawn water from this fountain of salvation, and it has never failed us.' Christ's audacious presentation of Himself to the world as adequate to fill all its needs, and slake all its thirst, has been verified by nineteen centuries of experience, and there are many men and women all over the world to-day who would be ready to set to their seals that Christ is true, and that He, indeed, is all-sufficient for the soul.

Brethren, I do not wish to dwell upon this aspect of our Lord's character in more than a sentence, but I beseech you to ask yourselves what is the impression that is left of the character of a man who says such things, unless He was something more than one of our race? Jesus Christ, it is as clear as day, in these words makes a claim which only divinity can warrant Him in making, or can fulfil when it is made. And I would

urge you to consider what the alternative is, if you do not believe that Jesus Christ here sets Himself forth as the Incarnate Word of God, sufficient for all humanity. 'I am meek and lowly in heart'—and His lowliness of heart is proved in a strange fashion, if He stands up before the race and says, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.'

III. Note, further, Christ's invitation.

'Let him come . . . and drink'—two expressions for one thing. That invitation sounds all through Scripture, and, perhaps, there was lingering in our Lord's mind, besides the reference to the rock that yielded the water, some echo of the words of the second Isaiah: 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' 'Nay!' said Christ, 'not to the waters, but to Me.' And then we hear from His own lips the same invitation addressed to the woman of Samaria, with the difference that to her, an alien, He pointed only to the natural water in the well that had been Jacob's, whereas, to these people, the descendants of the chosen race, He pointed to the miracle in the desert, and claimed to fulfil that. And on the very last page of Scripture, as it is now arranged, there stands the echo again of this saying of my text, 'Let him that is athirst come'—there must be the sense of need, as I was saying, before there is the coming—'and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.'

Now, dear friends, beneath these two metaphorical expressions there lies one simple condition. I put it into three words, which, for the sake of being easily remembered, I cast into an alliterative form: approach Christ, appropriate Christ, adhere to Christ.

Approach Christ. You come by faith, you come by

love, you come by communion. And you can come if you will, though He is now on the throne.

Appropriate Christ. It is vain that the water should be gushing from the rock there, unless you make it your own by drinking. It must pass your lips. It must become your personal possession. You must enclose a piece of the common, and make it your very own. 'He loved *us*, and gave Himself for *us*'; well and good, but strike out the '*us*' and put in '*me*.' 'He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.' The river may be flowing right past your door, yet your lips may be cracked with thirst, even whilst you hear the tinkle of its music amongst the sedges and the pebbles. Appropriate Christ. 'Come . . . and drink.'

Adhere to Christ. You were thirsty yesterday: you drank. That will not slake to-day's thirst, nor prevent its recurrence. And you must keep on drinking if you are to keep from perishing of thirst. Day by day, drop by drop, draught by draught, you must drink. According to the ancient Jewish legend, which Paul in one of his letters refers to, about this very miracle, you must have the Rock following you all through your desert pilgrimage, and you must drink daily and hourly, by continual faith, love, and communion.

IV. We have here not only these points, but a fourth. Christ's promise.

'He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' That is one case of the universal law that a man who trusts Christ becomes like the Christ whom he trusts. Derivatively and by impartation, no doubt, but still the man who has gone to that Rock, to the springing fountain as it gushes forth, receives into himself an inward life by the communi-

cation of Christ's divine Spirit, so that he has in him a fountain 'springing up into life everlasting.' The Book of Proverbs says, 'The good man shall be satisfied from himself,' but the good man is only satisfied from himself when he can say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' and from that better self he will be satisfied.

So we may have a well in the courtyard, and may be able to bear in ourselves the fountain of water, and where the divine life of Christ by His Spirit has through faith been implanted within us, it will come out from us. There is a question for you Christian people—do any rivers of living water flow out of you? If they do not, it is to be doubted whether you have drunk of the fountain. There are many professing Christians who are like the foul little rivers that pass under the pavements in Manchester, all impure, and covered over so that nobody sees them. 'Out of him shall flow rivers of living water'—that is Christ's way of communicating the blessing of eternal life to the world—by the medium of those who have already received it. Christian men and women, if your faith has brought the life into you, see to it that approaching Christ, and appropriating Christ, and adhering to Christ, you are becoming assimilated to Christ, and in your daily life, God's grace fructifying through you to all, are 'become as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

'... I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'—JOHN viii. 12.

JESUS CHRIST was His own great theme. Whatever be the explanation of the fact, there stands the fact that, if we know anything at all about His habitual tone of teaching, we know that it was full of Himself. We know, too, that what He said about Himself was very unlike the language becoming a wise and humble religious teacher. Both the prominence given to His own personality, and the tremendous claims He advances for Himself, are hard to reconcile with any conception of His nature and work except one,—that there we see God manifest in the flesh. Are such words as these fit to be spoken by any man conscious of his own limitations and imperfections of life and knowledge? Would they not be fatal to any one's pretensions to be a teacher of religion or morality? They assert that the Speaker is the Source of illumination for the world; the only Source; the Source for all. They assert that 'following' Him, whether in belief or in deed, is the sure deliverance from all darkness, either of error or of sin; and implants in every follower a light which is life. And the world, instead of turning away from such monstrous assumptions, and drowning them in scornful laughter, or rebelling against them, has listened, and largely believed, and has not felt them to mar the beauty of meekness, which, by a strange anomaly, this Man says that He has.

Words parallel to these are frequent on our Lord's lips. In each instance they have some special appropriateness of application, as is probably the case here.

The suggestion has been reasonably made, that there is an allusion in them to part of the ceremonial connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, at which we find our Lord present in the previous chapter. Commentators tell us that on the first evening of the Feast, two huge golden lamps, which stood one on each side of the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court, were lighted as the night began to fall, and poured out a brilliant flood over Temple and city and deep gorge; while far into the midnight, troops of rejoicing worshippers clustered about them with dance and song. The possibility of this reference is strengthened by the note of place which our Evangelist gives. 'These things spake Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple,' for the 'treasury' stood in the same court, and doubtless the golden lamps were full in sight of the listening groups. It is also strengthened by the unmistakable allusion in the previous chapter to another portion of the ceremonial of the Feast, where our Lord puts forth another of His great self-revelations and demands, in singular parallelism with that of our text, in the words, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.' That refers to the custom during the Feast of drawing water from the fountain of Siloam, which was poured out on the altar, while the gathered multitude chanted the old strain of Isaiah's prophecy: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.' It is to be remembered, too, in estimating the probability of our text belonging to these Temple-sayings at the Feast, that the section which separates it from them, and contains the story about the woman taken in adultery, is judged by the best critics to be out of place here, and is not found in the most valuable manuscripts. If, then, we suppose this allusion to be fairly probable, I

think it gives a special direction and meaning to these grand words, which it may be worth while to think of briefly.

The first thing to notice is—the intention of the ceremonial to which our Lord here points as a symbol of Himself. What was the meaning of these great lights that went flashing through the warm autumn nights of the festival? All the parts of that Feast were intended to recall some feature of the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness; the lights by the altar were memorials of the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. When, then, Jesus says, 'I am the Light of the world,' He would declare Himself as being in reality, and to every soul of man to the end of time, what that cloud with its heart of fire was in outward seeming to one generation of desert wanderers.

Now, the main thing which it was to these, was the visible vehicle of the divine presence. 'The Lord went before them in a pillar of a cloud.' 'The Lord looked through the pillar.' 'The Lord came down in the cloud and spake with him.' The 'cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared.' Such is the way in which it is ever spoken of, as being the manifestation to Israel in sensible form of the presence among them of God their King. 'The glory of the Lord' has a very specific meaning in the Old Testament. It usually signifies that brightness, the flaming heart of the cloudy pillar, which for the most part, as it would appear, veiled by the cloud, gathered radiance as the world grew darker at set of sun, and sometimes, at great crises in the history, as at the Red Sea, or on Sinai, or in loving communion with the law-giver, or in swift judgment against the rebels, rent the veil and flamed on men's eyes. I need not remind you how this same

pillar of cloud and fire, which at once manifested and hid God, was thereby no unworthy symbol of Him who remains, after all revelation, unrevealed. Whatsoever sets forth, must also shroud, the infinite glory. Concerning all by which He makes Himself known to eye, or mind, or heart, it must be said, 'And there was the hiding of His power.' The fire is ever folded in the cloud. Nay, at bottom, the light which is full of glory is therefore inaccessible, and the thick darkness in which He dwells is but the 'glorious privacy' of perfect light.

That guiding pillar, which moved before the moving people—a cloud to shelter from the scorching heat, a fire to cheer in the blackness of night—spread itself above the sanctuary of the wilderness; and 'the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.' When the moving Tabernacle gave place to the fixed Temple, again '*the* cloud filled the house of the Lord'; and there—dwelling between the cherubim, the types of the whole order of creatural life, and above the mercy-seat, that spoke of pardon, and the ark that held the law, and behind the veil, in the thick darkness of the holy of holies, where no feet trod, save once a year one white-robed priest, in the garb of a penitent, and bearing the blood that made atonement—shone the light of the glory of God, the visible majesty of the present Deity.

But long centuries had passed since that light had departed. 'The glory' had ceased from the house that now stood on Zion, and the light from between the cherubim. Shall we not, then, see a deep meaning and reference to that awful blank, when Jesus standing there in the courts of that Temple, whose inmost shrine was, in a most sad sense, empty, pointed to the quenched lamps that commemorated a departed Shechinah, and said, 'I am the Light of the world'?

He is the Light of the world, because in Him is the glory of God. His words are madness, and something very like blasphemy, unless they are vindicated by the visible indwelling in Him of the present God. The cloud of the humanity, 'the veil, that is to say, His flesh,' enfolds and tempers; and through its transparent folds reveals, even while it swathes, the Godhead. Like some fleecy vapour flitting across the sun, and irradiated by its light, it enables our weak eyes to see light, and not darkness, in the else intolerable blaze. Yes! Thou art the Light of the world, because in Thee dwelleth 'the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Thy servant hath taught us the meaning of Thy words, when he said: 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Then, subordinate to this principal thought, is the other on which I may touch for a moment—that Christ, like that pillar of cloud and fire, *guides* us in our pilgrimage. You may remember how emphatically the Book of Numbers (chap. ix.) dwells upon the absolute control of all the marches and halts by the movements of the cloud. When it was taken up, they journeyed; when it settled down, they encamped. As long as it lay spread above the Tabernacle, there they stayed. Impatient eyes might look, and impatient spirits chafe—no matter. The camp might be pitched in a desolate place, away from wells and palm-trees, away from shade, among fiery serpents, and open to fierce foes—no matter. As long as the pillar was motionless, no man stirred. Weary slow days might pass in this compulsory inactivity; but 'whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the Tabernacle,

the children of Israel journeyed not.' And whenever it lifted itself up,—no matter how short had been the halt, how weary and footsore the people, how pleasant the resting-place—up with the tent-pegs immediately, and away. If the signal were given at midnight, when all but the watchers slept, or at midday, it was all the same. There was the true Commander of their march. It was not Moses, nor Jethro, with his quick Arab eye and knowledge of the ground, that guided them; but that stately, solemn pillar, that floated before them. How they must have watched for the gathering up of its folds as they lay softly stretched along the Tabernacle roof; and for its sinking down, and spreading itself out, like a misty hand of blessing, as it sailed in the van!

'I am the Light of the world.' We have in Him a better guide through worse perplexities than theirs. By His Spirit within us, by that all-sufficient and perfect example of His life, by the word of His Gospel, and by the manifold indications of His providence, Jesus Christ is our Guide. If ever we go astray, it is not His fault, but ours. How gentle and loving that guidance is, none who have not yielded to it can tell. How wise and sure, none but those who have followed it know. He does not say 'Go,' but 'Come.' When He puts forth His sheep, He goes before them. In all rough places His quick hand is put out to save us. In danger He lashes us to Himself, as Alpine guides do when there is perilous ice to get across. As one of the psalms puts it, with wonderful beauty: 'I will guide thee with Mine eye'—a glance, not a blow—a look of directing love, that at once heartens to duty and tells duty. We must be very near Him to catch that look, and very much in sympathy with Him to understand

It; and when we do, we must be swift to obey. Our eyes must be ever toward the Lord, or we shall often be marching on, unwitting that the pillar has spread itself for rest, or idly dawdling in our tents long after the cloud has gathered itself up for the march. Do not let impatience lead you to hasty interpretation of His plans before they are fairly evolved. Many men by self-will, by rashness, by precipitate hurry in drawing conclusions about what they ought to do, have ruined their lives. Take care, in the old-fashioned phrase, of 'running before you are sent.' There should always be a good clear space between the guiding ark and you, 'about two thousand cubits by measure,' that there may be no mistakes about the road. It is neither reverent nor wise to be treading on the heels of our Guide in our eager confidence that we know where He wants us to go.

Do not let the warmth by the camp-fire, or the pleasantness of the shady place where your tent is pitched, keep you there when the cloud lifts. Be ready for change, be ready for continuance, because you are in fellowship with your Leader and Commander; and let Him say, Go, and you go; Do this, and you gladly do it, until the hour when He will whisper, Come; and, as you come, the river will part, and the journey will be over, and 'the fiery, cloudy pillar,' that 'guided you all your journey through,' will spread itself out an abiding glory, in that higher home where 'the Lamb is the light thereof.'

All true following of Christ begins with faith, or we might almost say that following is faith, for we find our Lord substituting the former expression for the latter in another passage of this Gospel parallel with the present. 'I am come a Light into the world, that

whosoever believeth on Me should not walk in darkness.' The two ideas are not equivalent, but faith is the condition of following; and following is the outcome and test, because it is the operation, of faith. None but they who trust Him will follow Him. He who does not follow, does not trust. To follow Christ, means to long and strive after His companionship; as the Psalmist says, 'My soul followeth hard after Thee.' It means the submission of the will, the effort of the whole nature, the daily conflict to reproduce His example, the resolute adoption of His command as my law, His providence as my will, His fellowship as my joy. And the root and beginning of all such following is in coming to Him, conscious of mine own darkness, and trustful in His great light. We must rely on a Guide before we accept His directions; and it is absurd to pretend that we trust Him, if we do not go as He bids us. So 'Follow thou Me' is, in a very real sense, the sum of all Christian duty.

That thought opens out very wide fields, into which we must not even glance now; but I cannot help pausing here to repeat the remark already made, as to the gigantic and incomprehensible self-confidence that speaks here. 'Followeth *Me*'; then Jesus Christ calmly proposes Himself as the aim and goal for every soul of man; sets up His own doings as an all-sufficient rule for us all, with all our varieties of temper, character, culture, and work, and quietly assumes to have a right of precedence before, and of absolute command over, the whole world. They are all to keep *behind* Him, He thinks, be they saints or sages, kings or beggars; and the liker they are to Himself, He thinks, the nearer they will be to perfectness and life. He puts Himself at the head of the mystic march of the generations.

and, like the mysterious Angel that Joshua saw in the plain by Jericho, makes the lofty claim: 'Nay, but as *Captain* of the Lord's host am I come up.' Do we admit His claim because we know His Name? do we yield Him full trust because we have learned that He is the Light of men since He is the Word of God? Do we follow Him with loyal obedience, longing love, and lowly imitation, since He has been and is to us the Saviour of our souls?

In the measure in which we do, the great promises of this wonderful saying will be verified and understood by us—'He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness.' That saying has, as one may say, a lower and a higher fulfilment. In the lower, it refers to practical life and its perplexities. Nobody who has not tried it would believe how many difficulties are cleared out of a man's road by the simple act of trying to follow Christ. No doubt there will still remain obscurities enough as to what we ought to do, to call for the best exercise of patient wisdom; but an enormous proportion of them vanish like mist when the sun breaks through, when once we honestly set ourselves to find out whither the pillared Light is guiding. It is a reluctant will, and intrusive likings and dislikings, that obscure the way for us, much oftener than real obscurity in the way itself. It is seldom impossible to discern the divine will, when we only wish to know it that we may do it. And if ever it is impossible for us, surely that impossibility is like the cloud resting on the Tabernacle—a sign that for the present His will is that we should be still, and wait, and watch.

But there is a higher meaning in the words than even this promise of practical direction. In the profound symbolism of Scripture, especially of this Gospel,

'darkness' is the name for the whole condition of the soul averted from God. So our Lord here is declaring that to follow Him is the true deliverance from that midnight of the soul. There are a darkness of ignorance, a darkness of impurity, a darkness of sorrow; and in that threefold gloom, thickening to a darkness of death, are they enwrapt who follow not the Light. That is the grim, tragical side of this saying, too sad, too awful for our lips to speak much of, and best left in the solemn impressiveness of that one word. But the hopeful, blessed side of it is, that the feeblest beginnings of trust in Jesus Christ, and the first tottering steps that try to tread in His, bring us into the light. It does not need that we have reached our goal, it is enough that our faces are turned to it, and our hearts desire to attain it, then we may be sure that the dominion of the darkness over us is broken. To follow, though it be afar off, and with unequal steps, fills our path with increasing brightness, and even though evil and ignorance and sorrow may thrust their blackness in upon our day, they are melting in the growing glory, and already we may give thanks 'unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.'

But we have not merely the promise that we shall be led by the light and brought into the light. A yet deeper and grander gift is offered here: 'He shall have the light of life.' I suppose that means, not, as it is often carelessly taken to mean, a light which illuminates the life, but, like the similar phrases of this Gospel, 'bread of life,' 'water of life,'—light which is life. 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of

men.' These two are one in their source, which is Jesus, the Word of God. Of Him we have to say, 'With Thee is the fountain of life, in Thy light shall we see light.' They are one in their deepest nature; the life is the light, and the light the life. And this one gift is bestowed upon every soul that follows Christ. Not only will our outward lives be illumined or guided from without, but our inward being will be filled with the brightness. 'Ye were sometimes darkness, now are ye light in the Lord.'

That pillar of fire remained apart and without. But this true and better Guide of our souls enters in and dwells in us, in all the fulness of His triple gift of life, and light, and love. Within us He will chiefly prove Himself the Guide of our spirits, and will not merely cast His beams on the path of our feet, but will fill and flood us with His own brightness. All light of knowledge, of goodness, of gladness will be ours, if Christ be ours; and ours He surely will be if we follow Him. Let us take heed, lest turning away from Him we follow the will-o'-the-wisps of our own fancies, or the dancing lights, born of putrescence, that flicker above the swamps, for they will lead us into doleful lands where evil things haunt, and into outer darkness. Let us take heed how we use that light of God; for Christ, like His symbol of old, has a double aspect according to the eye which looks. 'It came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these.' He is either a Stone of stumbling or a sure Foundation, a savour of life or of death, and which He is depends on ourselves. Trusted, loved, followed, He is light. Neglected, turned from, He is darkness. Though He be the Light of the world, it is only the man

who follows Him to whom He can give the light of life. Therefore, man's awful prerogative of perverting the best into the worst forced Him, who came to be the light of men, to that sad and solemn utterance: 'For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

THREE ASPECTS OF FAITH

'Many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him . . .'.—JOHN viii. 30, 31.

THE Revised Version accurately represents the original by varying the expression in these two clauses, retaining 'believed on Him' in the former, and substituting the simple 'believed Him' in the latter. The variation in two contiguous clauses can scarcely be accidental in so careful a writer as the Apostle John. And the reason and meaning of it are obvious enough on the face of the narrative. His purpose is to distinguish between more and less perfect acceptance of Jesus Christ. The more perfect is the former, 'they believed on Him'; the less perfect is the latter, the simple acceptance of His word on His claim of Messiahship, which is stigmatised as shallow, and proved to be transient by the context.

They were 'Jews' which believed, and they continued to be so whilst they were believing. Now, the word 'Jew' in this Gospel always connotes antagonism to Jesus Christ; and as for these persons, how slight and unreliable their adhesion to the Lord is, comes out in the course of the next few verses; and by the end of the chapter they are taking up stones to stone Him.

So John would show us that there is a kind of acceptance which may be real, and may be the basis of something much better hereafter, but which, if it does not grow, rots and disappears; and he would draw a broad line of distinction between that and the other mental act, far deeper, more wholesome, more lasting and vital, which he designates as 'believing on Him.' I take these words, then, for consideration, not so much to deal with other thoughts suggested by them, as because they afford me a starting-point for the consideration of the various phases of the act of believing, its blessings and its nature, and its relation to its objects, which are expressed in the New Testament by the various grammatical connections and constructions of this word.

Now, the facts with which I wish to deal may be very briefly stated. There are three ways in which the New Testament represents the act of believing, and its relation to its Object, Christ. These three are, first, the simple one which appears in the text as 'believed Him.' Then there is a second, which appears in two forms, slightly different, but which, for our purpose, may be treated as substantially the same—'believing on Him.' And then there is a third, which, literally and accurately translated is, 'believing unto' or 'into Him.' That phrase is John's favourite one, and rather unfortunately, though perhaps necessarily, it has been generally rendered by our translators by the less forcible 'believing in,' which gives the idea of repose in, but does not give the idea of motion towards. These three, then, I think, do set forth, if we will ponder them, very large lessons as to the essence of this act of believing, as to the Object upon which it fastens, and as to the blessings which flow from it, which it will

be worth our while to consider now. I may cast the whole into the shape of three exhortations: believe Him, believe on Him, believe unto Him.

I. First, then, believe Christ.

We accept a man's words when we trust the man. Even if belief, or faith, is represented in the New Testament, as it very rarely is, as having for its object the words of revelation, behind that acceptance of the words lies confidence in the person speaking. And the beginning of all true Christian faith has in it, not merely the intellectual acceptance of certain propositions as true, but a confidence in the veracity of Him by whom they are made known to us—even Jesus Christ our Lord.

I do not need to insist upon that at any length here—it would take me away from my present purpose; but what I do wish to emphasise is, that from the very starting-point, the smallest germ of the most rudimentary and imperfect faith which knits a soul to Jesus Christ has Him for its Object, and is thus distinguished from the mere acceptance of truths which, on other grounds than the authority of the speaker, may legitimately commend themselves to a man.

Then believe Him. Now, that breaks up into two thoughts, which are all that I intend to deduce from it now, although many more might be suggested. The one is this, that the least and the lowest that Jesus Christ asks from us is the entire and unhesitating acceptance of His utterances as final, conclusive, and absolutely true. Whatever more Jesus Christ may be, He is, by His life and words, the Communicator of divine and certain truth. He is a Teacher, though He is a great deal more. And whatever more Christian

faith may be—and it is a great deal more—it requires, at least, the frank and full recognition of the authority of every word that comes from His lips. A Christianity without a creed is a dream. Bones without flesh are very dry, no doubt; but what about flesh without bones? An inert, shapeless mass. You will never have a vigorous and true Christian life if it is to be moulded according to the fantastic dream of these latter days, which tells us that we may take Jesus as the Guide of our conduct and need not mind about what He says to us. ‘Believe Me’ is His requirement. The words of His mouth, and the revelations which He has made in the sweetness of His life, and in all the graciousness of His dealings, are the very unveiling to man of absolute and final and certain truth.

But then, on the other hand, let us remember that, while all this is most clear and distinct in the teaching of Scripture, it carries us but a very short way. We find, in the instance from which we take our starting-point in this sermon, the broad distinction drawn, and practically illustrated in the conduct of the persons concerned, between the simple acceptance of what Christ says, and a true faith that clings to Him for evermore. And the same kind of disparagement of the lower process of merely accepting His word is found more than once in connection with the same phrases. We find, for instance, the two which are connected in our texts used in a previous conversation between our Lord and His antagonists. When He says to them, ‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent,’ they reply, dragging down His claim to a lower level, ‘What sign showest Thou, that we may see, and believe Thee?’ He demanded belief *on* Himself; they answer, ‘We are ready

to *believe you*, on condition that we see something that may make the rendering of our belief a logical necessity for us.'

Let us lay to heart the rudimentary and incomplete character of a faith which simply accepts the teaching of Jesus Christ, and does no more. The notion that orthodoxy is Christianity, that a man who does not contradict the teaching of the New Testament is thereby a Christian, is a very old and very perilous and very widespread one. There are many of us who have no better claim to be called Christians than this, that we never denied anything that Jesus Christ said, though we are not sufficiently interested in it, I was going to say, even to deny it. This rudimentary faith, which contents itself with the acceptance of the truth revealed, hardens into mere formalism, or liquefies into mere careless indifference as to the very truth that it professes to believe. There is nothing more impotent than creeds which lie dormant in our brains, and have no influence upon our lives. I wonder how many readers of this sermon, who fancy themselves good Christians, do with their creed as the Japanese used to do with their Emperor—keep him in a palace behind bamboo screens, and never let him do anything, whilst all the reality of power was possessed by another man, who did not profess to be a king at all. Do you think you are Christians because you would sign thirty-nine or three hundred and ninety articles of Christianity, if they were offered to you, while there is not one of them that influences either your thinking or your conduct? Do not let us have these 'sluggish kings,' with a mayor of the place to do the real government, but set on the throne of your hearts the principles of your religion, and see to it that all your convictions be

translated into practice, and all your practice be informed by your convictions.

This belief in a set of dogmas, on the authority of Jesus Christ, about which dogmas we do not care a rush, and which make no difference upon our lives, is the faith about which James has so many hard things to say; and he ventures upon a parallel that I should not like to venture on unless I were made bold by his example: 'Thou believest, O vain man! thou doest well: the devils also believe, and'—better than you, in that their belief does something for them, they 'believe—and tremble.' But what shall we say about a man who professes himself a disciple, and neither trembles, nor thrills, nor hopes, nor dreads, nor desires, nor does any single thing because of his creed? Believe Jesus, but do not stop there.

II. Believe on Christ.

Now, as I have remarked already, and as many of you know, there is a slightly different, twofold form of this phrase in Scripture. I need not trouble you with the minute distinction between the one and the other. Both forms coincide in the important point on which I wish to touch. That representation of believing *on* Christ carries us away at once from the mere act of acceptance of His word on His authority to the far more manifestly voluntary, moral, and personal act of reliance upon Him. The metaphor is expanded in various ways in Scripture, and instead of offering any thoughts of my own about it, I would simply ask attention to three of the forms in which it is set forth in the Old and in the New Testaments.

The first of them, and the one which we may regard as governing the others, is that found in the words of Isaiah, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a sure

Foundation'; and, as the Apostle Peter comments, 'He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.' There the thoughts presented are the superposition of the building upon its Foundation, the rest of the soul, and the rearing of the life on the basis of Jesus Christ.

How much that metaphor says to us about Him as the Foundation, in all the aspects in which we can apply that term! He is the Basis of our hope, the Guarantee of our security, the Foundation-stone of our beliefs, the very Ground on which our whole life reposes, the Source of our tranquillity, the Pledge of our peace. All that I think, feel, desire, wish, and do, ought to be rested upon that dear Lord, and builded on Him by simple faith. By patient persistence of effort rearing up the fabric of my life firmly upon Him, and grafting every stone of it—if I might so use the metaphor—into the bedding-stone, which is Christ, I shall be strong, peaceful, and pure.

The storm comes, the waters rise, the winds howl, the hail and the rain 'sweep away the refuge of lies,' and the dwellers in these frail and foundationless houses are hurrying in wild confusion from one peak to another, before the steadily rising tide. But he that builds on that Foundation 'shall not make haste,' as Isaiah has it; shall not need to hurry to shift his quarters before the flood overtake him; shall look out serene upon all the hurtling fury of the wild storm, and the rise of the sullen waters. So, reliance on Christ, and the honest making of Him the Basis, not of our hopes only, but of our thinkings and of our doings, and of our whole being, is the secret of security, and the pledge of peace.

Then there is another form of the same phrase, 'believing on,' in which is suggested not so much the figure

of building upon a foundation, as of some feeble man resting upon a strong stay, or clinging to an outstretched and mighty arm. The same metaphor is implied in the word 'reliance.' We lean upon Christ when, forsaking all other props, and realising His sufficiency and sweetness, we rest the whole weight of our weariness and all the impotence of our weakness upon His strong and unwearied arm, and so are saved. All other stays are like that one to which the prophet compares the King of Egypt—the papyrus reed in the Nile stream, on which, if a man leans, it will break into splinters which will go into his flesh, and make a poisoned wound. But if we lean on Christ, we lean on a brazen wall and an iron pillar, and anything is possible sooner than that that stay shall give.

There is still another form of the metaphor, in which neither building upon a foundation, nor leaning upon a support which is thought of as below what rests upon it, are suggested, but rather the hanging upon something firm and secure which is above what hangs from it. The same picture is suggested by our word 'dependence.' 'As a nail fastened in a sure place,' said one of the prophets, 'on Him shall hang all the glory of His Father's house.'

' Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.'

The rope lowered over the cliffs supports the adventurous bird-nester in safety above the murmuring sea. They who clasp Christ's hand outstretched from above, may swing over the deepest, most vacuous abyss, and fear no fall.

So, brother, build on Christ, rely on Him, depend on Him, and it shall not be in vain. But if you will not

build on the sure Foundation, do not wonder if the rotten one gives way. If you will not lean on the strong Stay, complain not when the weak one crumbles to dust beneath your weight. And if you choose to swing over the profound depth at the end of a piece of pack-thread, instead of holding on by an adamantine chain wrapped round God's throne, you must be prepared for its breaking and your being smashed to pieces below.

III. The last exhortation that comes out of this comparative study of these phrases is—Believe into Christ.

That is a very pregnant and remarkable expression, and it can scarcely, as you see, be rendered into our language without a certain harshness; but still it is worth while to face the harshness for the sake of getting the double signification that is involved in it. For when we speak of believing unto or into Him, we suggest two things, both of which, apparently, were in the minds of the writers of the New Testament. One is motion towards, and the other is repose in, that dear Lord.

So, then, true Christian faith is the flight of the soul towards Christ. Therein is one of the special blessednesses of the Christian life, that it has for its object and aim absolutely infinite and unattainable completeness and glory, so that unwearied freshness, inexhaustible buoyancy, endless progress, are the dower of every spirit that truly trusts in Christ. All other aims and objects are limited, transient, and will be left behind. Every other landmark will sink beneath the horizon, where so many of our landmarks have sunk already, and where they will all disappear when the last moment comes. But we may have, and

if we are Christian people we shall have, bright before us, sufficiently certain of being reached to make our efforts hopeful and confident, sufficiently certain of never being reached to make our efforts blessed with endless aspirations, the great light and love of that dear Lord, to yearn after whom is better than to possess all besides, and following hard after whom, even in the very motion there is rest, and in the search there is finding. Religion is the flight of the soul, the aspiration of the whole man after the unattainable Attainable—‘that I may know Him, and be found in Him.’

Oh, how such thoughts ought to shame us who call ourselves Christians! Growth, progress, getting nearer to Christ, yearning ever with a great desire after Him!—do not the words seem irony when applied to most of us? Think of the average type of sluggish contentment with present attainments that marks Christian people—tortoises in their crawling rather than eagles in their flight. And let us take our portion of shame, and remember that the faith which believes Him, and that which believes on Him, both need to be crowned and perfected by that which believes towards Him, of which the motto is, ‘Forgetting the things that are behind, I reach forward to the things that are before.’

But there is another side to this last phase of faith. That true believing towards or unto Christ is the rest of the soul in Him. By faith that deep and most real union of the believing soul with Jesus Christ is effected which may be fitly described as our entrance into and abode in Him. The believer is as if incorporated into Him in whom he believes. Indeed, the Apostle ventures to use a more startling expression than *incorporation* when he says that ‘he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. If by faith we press

towards, by faith we shall be in, Christ. Faith is at once motion and rest, search and finding, desire and fruition. The felicity of this last form of the phrase is its expression of both these ideas, which are united in fact as in word. A rare construction of the verb to *believe*, with the simple preposition *in*, coincides with this part of the meaning of *believing unto* or *into*, and need not be separately considered.

With this understanding of its meaning, we see how natural is John's preference for this construction. For surely, if he has anything to tell us, it is that the true Christian life is a life enclosed, as it were, in Jesus Christ. Nor need I remind you how Paul, though he starts from a different point of view, yet coincides with John in this teaching. For, to him, to be 'in Christ' is the sum of all blessedness, righteousness, peace, and power. As in an atmosphere, we may dwell in Him. He may be the strong Habitation to which we may continually resort. One of the Old Testament words for trusting means taking refuge, and such a thought is naturally suggested by this New Testament form of expression. 'I flee unto Thee to hide me.' In that Fortress we dwell secure.

To be in Jesus, wedded to Him by the conjunction of will and desire, wedded to Him in the oneness of a believing spirit and in the obedience of a life, to be thus in Christ is the crown and climax of faith, and the condition of all perfection. To be in Christ is life; to be out of Him is death. In Him we have redemption; in Him we have wisdom, truth, peace, righteousness, hope, confidence. To be in Him is to be in heaven. We enter by faith. Faith is not the acceptance merely of His Word, but is the reliance of the soul on Him, the flight of the soul towards Him,

the dwelling of the soul in Him. 'Come, My people, into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee . . . until the indignation be overpast.'

'NEVER IN BONDAGE'

'We . . . were never in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free!'—JOHN viii. 33.

'NEVER in bondage to any man'? Then what about Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Syria? Was there not a Roman garrison looking down from the castle into the very Temple courts where this boastful falsehood was uttered? It required some hardihood to say, 'Never in bondage to any man,' in the face of such a history, and such a present. But was it not just an instance of the strange power which we all have and exercise, of ignoring disagreeable facts, and by ingenious manipulation taking the wrinkles out of the photograph? The Jews were perhaps not misunderstanding Jesus Christ quite so much as these words may suggest. If He had been promising, as they chose to assume, political and external liberty, I fancy they would have risen to the bait a little more eagerly than they did to His words.

But be that as it may, this strange answer of theirs suggests that power of ignoring what we do not want to see, not only in the way in which I have suggested, but also in another. For if they had any inkling of what Jesus meant by slavery and freedom, they, by such words as these, put away from themselves the thought that they were, in any deep and inward sense, bondsmen, and that a message of liberty had any application to them. Ah, dear friends! there was a

great deal of human nature in these men, who thus put up a screen between them and the penetrating words of our Lord. Were they not doing just what many of us—all of us to some extent—do: ignoring the facts of their own necessities, of their own spiritual condition, denying the plain lessons of experience? Like them, are not we too often refusing to look in the face the fact that we all, apart from Him, are really in bondage? Because we do not realise the slavery, are we not indifferent to the offer of freedom? 'We were never in bondage'; consequently we add, 'How sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?' So then, my text brings us to think of three things: our bondage, our ignorance of our bondage, our consequent indifference to Christ's offer of liberty. Let me say a word or two about each of these.

First as to—

I. Our bondage.

Christ follows the vain boast in the text, with the calm, grave, profound explanation of what He meant: 'Whoso committeth sin is the slave of sin.' That is true in two ways. By the act of sinning a man shows that he is the slave of an alien power that has captured him; and in the act of sinning, he rivets the chains and increases the tyranny. He is a slave, or he would not obey sin. He is more a slave because he has again obeyed it. Now, do not let us run away with the idea that when Jesus speaks of sin and its bondage, He is thinking only, or mainly, of gross outrages and contradictions of the plain law of morality and decency, that He is thinking only of external acts which all men brand as being wrong, or of those which law qualifies as crimes. We have to go far deeper than that, and into a far more inward region of life than

that, before we come to apprehend the inwardness and the depth of the Christian conception of what sin is. We have to bring our whole life close up against God, and then to judge its deeds thereby. Therefore, though I know I am speaking to a mass of respectable, law-abiding people, very few of you having any knowledge of the grosser and uglier forms of transgression, and I dare say none of you having any experience of what it is to sin against human law, though I do not charge you—God forbid!—with *vices*, and still less with *crimes*, I bring to each man's conscience a far more searching word than either of these two, when I say, 'We all have *sinned* and come short of the glory of God.' This declaration of the universality and reality of the bondage of sin is only the turning into plain words of a fact which is of universal experience, though it may be of a very much less universal consciousness. We may not be aware of the fact, because, as I have to show you, we do not direct our attention to it. But there it is; and the truth is that every man, however noble his aspirations sometimes, however pure and high his convictions, and however honest in the main may be his attempts to do what is right, when he deals honestly with himself, becomes more or less conscious of just that experience which a great expert in soul analysis and self-examination made: 'I find a law'—an influence working upon my heart with the inevitableness and certainty of law—'that when I would do good, evil is present with me.'

We all know that, whether we regard it as we ought or no. We all say Amen to that, when it is forced upon our attention. There is something in us that thwarts aspiration towards good, and inclines to evil.

‘What will but felt the fleshly screen?’

And it is not only a screen. It not only prevents us from rising as high as we would, but it sinks us so low as to do deeds that something within us recoils from and brands as evil. Jesus teaches us that he who commits sin is the slave of sin; that is to say, that an alien power has captured and is coercing the wrong-doer. That teaching does not destroy responsibility, but it kindles hope. A foreign foe, who has invaded the land, may be driven out of the land, and all his prisoners set free, if a stronger than he comes against him. Christianity is called gloomy and stern, because it preaches the corruption of man's heart. Is it not a gospel to draw a distinction between the evil that a man does, and the self that a man may be? Is it not better, more hopeful, more of a true evangel, to say to a man, 'Sin dwelleth in you,' than to say, 'What is called sin is only the necessary action of human nature'? To believe that their present condition is not slavery makes men hopeless of ever gaining freedom, and the true gospel of the emancipation of humanity rests on the Christian doctrine of the bondage of sin.

Let me remind you that freedom consists not in the absence of external constraints, but in the animal in us being governed by the will, for when the flesh is free the man is a slave. And it means that the will should be governed by the conscience; and it means that the conscience should be governed by God. These are the stages. Men are built in three stories, so to speak. Down at the bottom, and to be kept there, are inclinations, passions, lust, desires, all which are but blind aimings after their appropriate satisfaction, without any question as to whether the satisfaction is right or wrong; and above that a dominant will which is meant to control, and above that a conscience. That is the

pyramid; and as by the sunshine on the gilded top of some spire, the shining apex, the conscience, is illumined when the light of God falls upon it. And when a man is built in that fashion, and keeps to that fashion, then, and only then, is he free.

I need not remind you of how the metaphor of my text receives its most tragical and yet most common illustration and confirmation in the awful fact of the power of any evil thing, once thought or done by a man, to reproduce itself, onwards and ever onwards. It is a far commoner thing for a man never to have done some given evil, never to have got drunk, never to have stolen, or the like, than to have done it only once. I have heard of a mysterious illness, in which at first medical analysis detected with difficulty one single bacterion in a great quantity of blood. But in a few days, so had they multiplied, that no drop could be taken anywhere from the veins which was not full of them. That is how men get under the slavery of any evil thing; and habit becomes stronger than anything except that 'strong Son of God, immortal Love,' whose Spirit can conquer even it. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye that are wont to do evil learn to do well.' The bondage is real and hard.

My text suggests to us that strange, sad fact—

II. Our ignorance of our slavery.

'We were never in bondage to any man,' said the Jews. We are but too apt to repeat the empty boast, and as they forgot Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus and Augustus, we forget our failures, our faults, our sins. We ignore them. Is not that, too, a plain fact of experience? A sadly large percentage of men never have really opened their eyes to the undeniable

truth that sin has dominion over them. They go along on the surface of things, keeping to the shallows of human life, occupying themselves with their various duties and enjoyments, and they never know, just because they shut their eyes to facts, or rather turn their eyes away from facts—what is their real condition in God's sight. Some of my present hearers are, in regard to this matter, what the old Puritans used to call 'Gospel-hardened.' They have their hearts and minds, I was going to say water-proofed, by repeated application to them, as I am trying to apply them now, of truths which but add one more film to the layers between their hearts and the Gospel. Because they are so familiar with the words of our message, they all but lose the faculty of bringing its power into contact with themselves. Oh! if I could overcome that tendency which there is in all regular church and chapel-goers to make themselves comfortable in their corners, and suppose that the man in the pulpit is saying what he ought to say, and that they need not give much heed to his message, because they have heard it all before—if I could once get the sharp point of this great Christian truth of our slavery under sin, through the manifold layers with which your heart is encrusted, you would find out the reality and pressure of a good many things that some of you think very phantasmal and of little consequence.

There is nothing about us that is more remarkable and more awful, when you come to think of it, than the power that we have, by not attending to something, of making that something practically non-existent. The great search-lights, that they now have on battle-ships, will fling a beam of terrible revealing power on one small segment of the vast circle of the sea; and all

the rest, though it may be filled with the enemy's fleet, will be lying in darkness. So just because we cannot get you to think of the facts of your slavery to sin, the facts are non-existent as far as you are concerned. Let me plead with you. Surely, surely it is not a thing worthy of a man never to go down into the deep places of your own hearts and see the ugly things that coil and wrestle and swarm and multiply there! Ezekiel was once led to a place where, through a hole broken in the wall, there was shown him an inner chamber, on the walls of which were painted the hideous idols of the heathen. And there, in the presence of the foul shapes, stood venerable priests and official dignitaries of Israel, with their censers in their hands, and their backs to the oracle of God. There is a chamber like that in all our hearts; and it would be a great deal better that we should go down, through the hole in the wall, and see it, than that we should live, as so many of us do, in this fool's paradise of ignorance of our own sin. It is because we will not attend to the facts that we ignore the facts. The evils that we do, and that we cherish undone in our hearts, are like the wreckers on some stormy coast, who begin operations by taking the tongue out of the bell that hangs on the buoy, and putting out the light that beams from the beacon. Sin chokes conscience; and so the worse a man is, the less he feels himself to be bad; and while a saint will be tortured with agonies of remorse for some slight peccadillo, a brigand will add a murder or two to his list, and wipe his mouth and say, 'I have done no harm.' We are ignorant of our sins because we bribe our consciences, because we drug our consciences, and will not attend to the facts of our own spiritual being.

That ignorance of our bondage is characteristic of the tone of mind of this generation. Things have changed in that respect, as in a great many others, since I was a boy. I do not hear now, from people who desire to unite themselves to Jesus Christ, the deep, poignant penitence and confession of sin that one used to hear. I do not hear the fact of sin, its gravity and universality, preached from pulpits in the way it used to be. I notice in the ordinary average man a tendency to think more about environment and heredity than about individual responsibility, and, on the whole, a very much lowered sense of the depth and the power and the universality of transgression. And that is why, to a large extent, the Christianity of this generation is so shallow a thing as it is.

That brings me, lastly, to say a word about—

III. The consequent indifference to Christ's offer of freedom.

‘How sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?’ Of course, if these Jews had no consciousness of bondage, there was no attraction for them in a promise of freedom.

That remark opens out two thoughts, on which I do not dwell. First, the ignoring of the fact of sin which is so common amongst us all to-day, makes it impossible to understand Christ and Christianity. Brethren, that great Gospel, and that great Lord who is the subject of the Gospel, have many other aspects than this. But this is the central thought as to it and Him, that it is the emancipation from sin, because He is the Emancipator. ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach deliverance to the captives.’ And wherever we find, as we do find in many quarters to-day, that the central fact of Christianity, the Death for the sin of the world, is

deposed from its place, there the life-blood is ebbing out of the Gospel. Historically, the beginning of almost all heresies has been the underestimate of the fact of sin. As long as you dwell in the shallows of human experience, a shallow Christianity and a shallow Christ will be enough for you. But when once you get to understand the depths of your own need, and the depths of your brother's need, then nothing less than the Christ who died to solve the problem, insoluble else, of how to emancipate the soul and the world from the tyranny of sin, will be enough for you. Once 'the waters of the great deep are broken up,' and the floods are out, there is nothing for it but the Ark. It is not enough, then, to speak of a human Christ; it is not enough, when a man's conscience has been roused, not to exaggeration, but to clear sight, of what he is—it is not enough, then, to speak of a pattern Christ, or of a teaching Christ. Ah! we want more than that. We want 'that which first of all I delivered unto you, how that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.'

And, brethren, just as the ignoring of the fact of sin makes the understanding of Christ and His word impossible, so it makes real reception of Him for ourselves impossible. Many men are brought near to Jesus by other roads; thank God for it! There are a thousand ways to the Cross, but it is the Cross that we must clasp, if in any true sense we are to clasp Christ. And there is all the difference between the superficial, partial, and easy-going profession of Christianity which is so common amongst us to-day, and the life-and-death clutching and clinging to Him which comes when, and only when, a man feels that the tyrant whom he served as a slave is close behind him, and that his only chance

of freedom is to hold fast by the horns of the altar of the Sanctuary, and to cleave to the Christ in whom, and in whom alone, we are free indeed.

THE SERVANT AND THE SON

‘And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

JOHN viii. 35.

I MUST first ask your attention to a remark or two on what I conceive to be the force and connection of this passage. There is nothing in the words themselves requiring explanation or illustration. They are simple and plain enough; but their bearing on what precedes and follows, and the application which they were intended to have, present very considerable difficulty.

‘The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.’ This at least is clear, that our Lord is speaking of *servant* and *son* generically, or in other words, is drawing a contrast between the two relations, wherever they are found, in the matter of permanence. A son is a natural, inalienable part of the family, whatever the family may be; a slave is not. He may be acquired, he may be sold, or given away to another master, or set free. In Jewish servitude—with which Christ’s hearers were chiefly familiar—there was special provision against the slave’s continuing ‘in the house for ever.’ At the Jubilee, unless he voluntarily elected to give himself up in perpetuity to his master (so passing from a state of involuntary slavery to one of willing servitude, which ceased thereby to be bondage)—in token whereof he had his ear fastened to the door-post with an awl through it—he was free to

depart where he liked. But a son is bound to his father's household by a tie which no distance breaks, and no time wears away.

Then comes the question, what application does Christ mean to be made of this general truth about the characteristic difference between service and sonship? The common answer seems to me to be very unsatisfactory. It is, in brief, this—that the servants who abide not in the house for ever are the Jews who, because they regarded themselves as bound to God only by the harsh bond of constrained obedience, and were slaves, not sons at heart, would certainly forfeit their special national privileges, and be cast out of the house—the land of Israel or the old covenant. According to that interpretation, the general statement would in effect be made special by inserting 'of God' in the clause, and would mean substantially this—he who is only an unwilling servant—a slave—of God's, has no permanent place in the household of God.

But you should observe that, in the previous verse, the master of the servant is distinctly specified—'he that committeth sin is the slave of *sin*.' And it is a most violent and sudden twist of the connection to make it turn away all at once from speaking of slaves of sin to speak of slaves of God. Notice, too, that both clauses of our text, the former as well as the latter, are laid as the double grounds on which the conclusion reposes—'If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' Keeping these two points in view, it seems impossible to accept the ordinary explanation of the words, which wrenches them forcibly apart from the preceding verse, and disconnects them from the conclusion which our Lord founds on them in the subsequent verse, whilst it brings in a wholly irrelevant

thought about the Jews being turned out of Canaan, because they were slaves and not sons of God.

Supposing, then, that whilst the words speak about servants and sons generically, laying down a general principle that applies to all the members of each class, the immediate application is meant to be to the slaves of *sin*, of whom He has just been speaking, would the words so referred yield an appropriate and adequate sense? What would be the force of the thought that Sin's slave does not abide for ever in Sin's house? Would it not be the declaration of the great truth that, howsoever hard and long the bondage and servitude of sin had been, yet the very relation itself is of such a character that it needs not to be perpetual, but bears upon its front the hope that one day the captive may come out of the prison-house and shake himself loose from his connection with this tyrant's household, of which he has become a part? However long and weary the years of bondage, the slave is not in his true home, nor incorporated hopelessly into his taskmaster's family. There is no natural affinity between him and his lord; but only a bond which may be snapped at any moment, if one can be found strong enough to 'enter the strong man's house, and spoil his goods.' The saying, then, may be regarded as stating the possibility of emancipation as contained in the very nature of the bondage.

The next clause goes on to declare that into the midst of this tyrant's household there has come one who is a Son, and abides for ever, by natural immutable relationship, in the household of God. It is clear that the first application of the general statement, that a son is for ever part of his father's family, must be to Christ. It is therefore clear that the house in which

He abides is the house of God. Sin's house, in so far as that expression denotes this fair world, belongs to God; and the tyranny which that grim despot wields is usurpation. Into the midst of human society He comes who is a Son for ever, and for ever dwells with the Father; and by reason of His everlasting Sonship and abode with God, He is able to convert the possibility of deliverance, which the very nature of the bondage proclaims, into actual fact, and to set us free. The slave need not abide for ever—*there is hope*. 'The Son abides ever'—*there is hope still brighter*.

And on both facts reposes the grand certainty—'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' If He have the will, as He has the power—if it shall be that He will really use his unquestionable prerogative for the purpose for which men, with eyes dim with tears and hearts torn by desperate hopes, long through a thousand generations—then ye shall be free indeed. Nor, in that case, will bare freedom only be ours, but, as is implied by the antithesis of our text, emancipation will be adoption, and to pass out of the state of the slave will be to pass into the alternative relation—the state of a son.

I have thus put briefly, but as far as I can see fairly, the sequence of thought which our Lord would here bring before us; and I would ask you to consider whether, so understood, the words do not hold together better, and yield a more consistent and impressive meaning than in the usual interpretation of them. Let me briefly try to expand a little further the principles which are thus set forth.

I. There is first the possible ending of the tyranny of sin.

'A slave abides not in the house for ever.' There-

fore the very fact that the service of sin is so hard a slavery shows it to be unnatural, abnormal, and capable of a termination. All the world has dimly hoped that it was so, if not from love of good, at all events from weariness of evil, and from pain of conscience. But no man has been sure of it, apart from the influence of revelation. It is Christ alone who makes us certain that this universal condition is yet an unnatural one, from which restoration is possible for us all. He alone shows us that the black walls of the prison-house where we toil, solid seeming, high above our power to scale, and clammy with the sighs of a thousand generations though they be, are undermined and tottering. Deliverance is possible. For, in the light of God's revelation, we see that the slave-master is an usurper. Sin is clearly not natural to man, as God meant him to be, howsoever it may seem to have entwined itself around his life. It is something supervening, not original; a deformity, not a part of the ideal by which God made him.

The most superficial glance at our own nature and condition, the constitution of our being, our capacities or relations, is enough to show that. The witnesses are within us. Look at these minds of ours that can originate and entertain 'thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof that they were born for immortality,' at those hearts with their rich treasures of transcendent affections wasted, as some drunken spendthrift throws handfuls of gold among a ragged mob; at these wills so weak and yet so strong, ever craving for some absolute authority to guide them, and yet ever impotently trying to be 'a law unto themselves'; at these consciences, so sensitive and yet so dull, waking up only when the evil is done, like careless warders who lock the prison doors with all safety after the prisoner has fled, powerless to

prevent but strong to avenge—voices which have no means of getting their behests obeyed, and yet are the echo of the supreme, personal Lawgiver's voice. Think of the manifest disproportion between ourselves as we are, and as we know we might be; remember that in this region *might* and *ought* are the same. And then say whether this universal condition of sinfulness is not plainly and in the deepest sense of the word—unnatural; a fungus, not a true growth; a monstrosity or abnormal development; a diseased excrescence or wen, and not sound, healthy flesh.

Then, if so, it is clear that there is no such relation between a sinful man and his sin as that deliverance from it is impossible. It must be possible to part them, and to leave the man stronger for the loss of what made him weak, and more himself by the plucking off him of the venomous beast that has fastened upon his life. Somehow or other it must be possible to separate me from my sin, to cast that behind God's back into the depths of the sea, and to set me before His face in light and love. If we are slaves of Sin, then we may be transferred from its household and brought to our true home in our Father's house. Here, then, is the blessed hope for us all. Howsoever the fetters may have galled and mortified the limbs and eaten into the stiffened wrists, they may be struck off. No man is condemned to a hopeless necessary continuance in evil. We may have been living all our days in it, and, so far as in us lies, may have corrupted and perverted our whole nature. Be it so. Still the foul thing has not become so intertwined with our life that it cannot be wrenched away. No matter what we are, for us all there is a possibility of deliverance. For criminals below the gallows with the rope around their necks, for those

who have gone farthest into the far country of forgetfulness of God, and there have wasted themselves in riotous living—ay, and for those who are harder to touch and more hopeless than publicans and harlots—the sleek, orthodox, respectable Scribes and Pharisees, the church and chapel going people, saturated with the form of religion and uninfluenced by its power—for all, freedom is possible.

And let me remind you that men have always cherished those convictions; even when they seemed to have the least reason for them, have cherished them obstinately in spite of history and of experience. They have tried to set themselves free, and their attempts have come to nothing; and yet, after all failures, this 'hope' has sprung 'immortal in the human breast.' People who have tried in vain to cure themselves of some awkward habit, some peculiarity of manner, some intonation of voice, yet believe that somehow or other there is a power fit to break from them all the chains of evil and to set them free. Strange, is it not? Pathetic, tragic, except on one hypothesis. I know few things sadder—unless we believe in Christ, the Deliverer, as I hope most of us do—than that indestructible hope with which a thousand sinful generations have lived, and yet have died without its fulfilment. What countless unfulfilled aspirations, what baffled trust, what gleams of light that faded and seemed treacherous as the morning red that dies into rainy grey before the day is old! And are the noblest visions, then, the falsest? and are we to believe the bitter creed that smiles sadly at these hopes as airy dreams? or is it true—as the world has believed, though it knew not how its hope was to be fulfilled—that the tyranny which has ruled the earth and built high the black walls of its prison-

house round all humanity is, after all, a usurpation which had a beginning later than man, and will have an end?

True, we cannot make the division between ourselves and our sin, nor effect the deliverance. It is like some cancer—a blood disease. We may pare and cut away the rotting flesh—the single manifestations of the evil we can do something to reduce. But the source of these is floating through the veins, and comes pulsing from the heart. A deeper cure than our surgery is needed, a transfusion of fresh blood from an untainted source. Sin is not our personality, and so we may have it removed and live. But sin has become so entwined with ourselves that we cannot separate the tangled mass. The demoniac in the Gospels, who in his confused consciousness did not know which was devil and which was man, and when the question was put, ‘What is thy name?’ gave the awful answer, which blends so strangely the voice of both, ‘*My name is legion, for we are many,*’ could not shake off the demon that rode him. No more can we. And yet it can be dragged from its lair. Rending and tearing, convulsions and foaming, wounds and semi-death may accompany the separation. Better these than ‘the strong man armed, keeping his goods in peace.’ The voice that said, ‘Thou foul spirit, I charge thee come out of him,’ has power still.

Whence arise these hopes, cherished in spite of all failures? They are like morning dreams which the proverb tells us are true. Their fulfilment is made probable by the very fact of their existence; for ‘God never sends mouths, but He sends meat to feed them.’ Their fulfilment lies in Him who fulfils the ‘unconscious prophecies’ and the conscious cravings of heathendom and humanity—even in the Christ who is all that the

world wants, and more than all that we or our brethren have dared to hope.

So much then for the first idea, contained in these words—that of the possibility, inherent in the very nature of the case, of emancipation from the burden and bondage of sin. The next verse goes on to declare how this possibility is converted into fact. So we have—

II. The actual Deliverer.

The slave need not abide for ever; but is there any one who will take him out of the unnatural state of slavery? The relationship is capable of being terminated, if there is any one who will terminate it. And the question whether there be, is answered in these words, 'The Son abideth ever,' which, while they are primarily a general statement, applying to all sons as such, have unquestionably a specific reference to our Lord Himself. That I presume is clear from the fact that there is founded on them, with a 'therefore,' to bind it firmly to them, the grand conclusion, 'If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'

Notice, too, that if the contrasted statements of our text are to be so put together as to give ground for that joyous certainty of true freedom as the Son's gift, then somehow or other the two houses must be the same; or at least the Son, who is ever in His Father's house, must yet, while thus abiding, also be in the midst of the bondsmen in the dark fortress of the tyrant. That is but a figurative way of putting the necessity which even our consciences and hearts, made wise by bitter experience of failure, can discern—that our freedom from sin must come from a power beyond the circle of humanity, and yet must be diffused from a source within the circle. Unless it come from above it

will not be able to lift us out of the pit of the prison-house; but unless it be on our level we shall not be able to grasp it. The Deliverer must Himself be free; therefore He must be removed from the fatal continuity of evil, which, like a lengthened chain, shackles all the prisoners together. The Deliverer must be like those whom He would help, and be a sharer in their condition. The contradictory requirements are harmonised in One, of whom it was spoken long ago, 'He hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives'; and who has Himself claimed to unite them both in His own person: 'No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.' He is truly one of us, the very perfection of humanity; the whole essential characteristics of manhood are in Him. He has come down from heaven, entered the prison-house, become one of the company of slaves—and yet all the while 'is in heaven,' abiding in that true and unbroken fellowship with God of which He testified when He said, 'The Father hath not left Me alone.' He is the Son of Man which came down from heaven, and He is 'the only begotten Son which *is* in the bosom of the Father.' Therefore is He the Deliverer of His brethren.

The conversion, then, of the mere possibility of freedom into actual fact requires two things—that the Deliverer should be the Son of God and that He should be the Son for ever. If we are ever, dear friends, to be rescued from the iron grip of this miserable bondage, it must be by one who wields and brings, and *is*, the energy, and the wisdom, and the all-bestowing love of the Father. It must be by one who is a Son in that full emphatic sense of perfect kindred in, and participation of, the boundless Godhead which

none other possesses. None less mighty has the power, none less patient has the love, which such a task needs. It must be *The Son* who sets us free.

And so I come to you with that living central truth of the Gospel, and beseech you, dear brethren, to lay to heart the solemn fact of our need, and the blessed answer to it which is given to us all in Christ. 'Such an High Priest became us.' He and His work are in accurate correspondence with our wants. There is no deliverance possible from this clinging curse of corruption unless there have come into the very midst of us bondsmen, one who shares our nature but does not share our sin, who is above us and yet beside us, who is separate from sinners and yet cleaveth closer than a brother to the most polluted, whose hands are pure and yet whose heart is so tender that He will lay His pure hand unshrinking on leprosy and death, who is in all points like ourselves and yet is unfettered by the chains under which we groan and die. And this impossible combination we have, blessed be God! in that dear Lord. Christ is the Son of God and the brother of every man. *There* is the life, fountal not derived, divine that it may be human; there is Manhood unstained by sin, having no affinity with evil, and in its completeness a living protest against the lie that sin is an integral part of human nature, and a prophecy that we too may be like Him, set free from bondage and perfected in glory. 'God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Yes! a Son will set free, none other will. Yes! the Son has set free. We need none other.

Further, our Lord puts emphasis here on the perpetual abiding of the Son, as a part of the basis of His

fitness for the mighty work. We and all men to the end of time have to trust to a living Saviour, who is as near to the latest generations as He was to those that gathered round His cross on earth. Nay, we may even say that He is nearer to save and fuller of power to bless, not indeed in Himself, but in our apprehensions of His nearness and fulness, which should be deepened by all that has passed since He ascended up on high. Have not the might of His work and the majesty of His person gained fresh illustrations from the experience of all these centuries? As distance has paled other lights, and hidden lower watch-towers below the horizon, have we not learned thereby to estimate more truly the brightness of the one undying flame which burns across the waste nor knows diminution by space nor extinction by time, and to measure more accurately the height of that rallying-point for the nations which towers higher and higher as we recede from it? Surely, if we will faithfully use the inspired record, the Indwelling Spirit, the voice of our own experience, and the history of God's Church, we may come, by reason of the very lapse of ages, and all which they have brought of testing and of triumph, to apprehend yet more of the fulness of Christ's freedom than was possible at first. 'It is expedient for you that I go away.'

Nor is this all; for the Son who bids us rejoice, both for His sake and ours, that He goes to the Father, was with the Father while He walked on earth, and is with us while He is on the throne of God. He abideth ever by our sides to bless and set free. He carries on our deliverance by the present forth-putting of His love and power, even as He effected it by His Cross. 'This man, because He continueth ever, is able to save unto the uttermost.' We have an ever-living Saviour to

trust to. 'The Son abideth for ever.' 'If He therefore make us free, we shall be free indeed.'

III. Then, finally, we may very briefly touch upon the thought that is implied here and in the whole context—namely, the abiding Sonship which constitutes the slave's emancipation.

The process of deliverance is the transference from the one household to the other. We are set free from our bondage when, through Christ, we receive the adoption, and cry 'Abba, Father!' This filial Spirit, the Spirit of life which was in Christ, and this alone, 'makes us free from the law of sin and death.' The only way by which a man is reclaimed from obedience to sin is by his learning to call God Father, and by receiving into his evil nature the life, kindred with the paternal source, which owns no allegiance to his former taskmaster. The only way by which a man receives that new life from God which has nothing to do with sin, and that consciousness of kindred with God which makes the name 'Father' natural to his heart, is by simple faith in Christ, who gives power to become sons of God to as many as receive Him.

There are but two conditions in which we can stand. One or other of them must be ours. The alternatives are—slaves of sin, or sons of God. What a contrast both in the relation and in that to which it is sustained! Slaves or sons! God or Sin! On the one side tyrannous bondage, on the other gentle swaying love. On the one side the whip and the lash, on the other, 'My son, hear the instruction of thy Father.' On the one side is *such* a master, to obey whom is degradation, and like all base-born usurpers, cruel as lawless. What a wretched humiliation for a man with such a nature to be the serf of such a lord—to be, as Milton says, 'the

dejected and downtrodden vassal of perdition!' On the other side is the Source of all love, the Fruition of all desires, the Fountain of all purity and all peace. And we, dear brethren, may, through Christ, draw near to Him as sons, and cry 'Abba, Father!' Then we shall abide in His house for ever, in the happy consciousness of His Fatherhood and love, compassed by His care, and enriched by His gifts, and glad to serve, and blessed in obedience. Earth's changes will not take us away from our rest in God, nor its distractions rob us of the sweetness of kindred with Him. Whithersoever we go we may still be at home with God; whatsoever we do we may still be about our Father's business. Death itself will not break our Sonship, nor our consciousness of it. We shall but pass from an outer to an inner abiding-place in our Father's house, the place prepared for us by the Son, who set us free. 'Thou art no more a servant, but a son,' and if sons, then 'heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.'

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIS FIRST COMING

'... I proceeded forth, and came from God.'—JOHN VIII. 42.

'BACK to Jesus' is the watchword of a growing and influential school to-day. There is a great deal in the cry, and in the drift of thought which it represents, with which every wise Christian must be in sympathy. But it covers very different tendencies. In some cases it means reverent submission to Jesus Christ, and acceptance of all His words. In some cases it is associated with a very free and arbitrary handling

of the Gospels, which substantially results in the rejection, as not genuine, of all Christ's sayings that point in the direction of His supernatural origin or divine power. The underlying motive in such cases is the wish to get away from the Epistles back to the supposed simpler teaching of the Sage and Saint of Nazareth. 'Back to Jesus' means, in many cases, 'get rid of Paul, and keep only as much of Matthew and the other Evangelists as may yield the image of a humanitarian Christ.' Doctrinal prepossessions lie below the critical processes.

But it is somewhat strange that those who go furthest in the direction of this free-and-easy handling of the records seem to proceed upon the principle that if once we can get at what Jesus said and thought about Himself and His mission, we have got to absolute truth. Now, that is strange, and especially strange from their point of view. For we do not generally accept a man's estimate of himself, especially if it is a high one, as conclusive. Experience has taught us to take the Pharisee's short way of dealing with such claims. 'Thou bearest record of Thyself; Thy record is not true.' But the world is ready to take Christ at His own valuation. How comes that?

I want to go 'back to Christ' now, and to collect what He Himself said about His mission. My subject is not the single saying that I have read, but the whole class of passages to which it belongs. They are somewhat numerous; and, unless I am very much mistaken, they lay deep and broad and unshakable the foundation for the very conception of Christ which the doctrinal Epistles draw out into distinct statements. If Jesus said about Himself and His work what the Gospels unanimously report Him to have

said, or anything like it, then the doctrines of Paul, and Peter, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, and John, are the only adequate explanation, and they are *but* the explanation, of His claims.

Now, with these preliminary remarks let me try to gather these sayings of the Lord about Himself and His work under two or three heads, which may classify them, and help us.

I. First, then, they give us Christ's own estimate of His heavenly origin and world-wide significance.

It is very remarkable that He only once speaks of having been 'born,' and that was under circumstances, as I shall have to show you presently, which explain the unusual expression. But at all other times it is either 'I come,' 'I am come,' 'the Son of Man came'; or it is 'I am sent.' Now that may be purely accidental, and it is quite conceivable that a man might drop into such a form of speech, if he were profoundly conscious of having a great work to do in the world, without any notion of thereby claiming anything extraordinary beyond the fact of his mission. But the persistent, exclusive use of the term does seem to indicate that Jesus Christ meant to claim something more than is common to humanity. And the presumption that He did so is elevated into certainty if you will notice, and bear with me whilst I adduce, two or three instances in which He expands the expression, so as to give us a glimpse of the fulness of its contents.

One of these is this word of my text, 'I proceeded forth'; that points to a condition in which He was before His earthly appearance, and which He voluntarily left. 'I came from God'; that points to His earthly life as being the permanent result of an initial act, which was voluntary and His own, and behind which

stretched an indefinite existence. That is fair commenting, and nothing more.

The presumption is made still more certain if we turn to another scene, where, to soothe His sorrowing friends in the upper chamber, He said, 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world.' There was one solemn motion, self-originated, and its two termini were the Father, beyond the reach of sight, and the world, the scene of His visible manifestation. And that solemn motion necessarily involved the turning upon itself, and the returning to the Source, as He goes on to say, 'Again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father.' The same 'I' vibrates between the unseen abode with the Father, and the visible manifestation upon earth; and the same volition is at work in the coming into, and the departing from, this earthly scene.

Again, I point to other words, spoken in strangely different circumstances, and, therefore, with an entirely different colouring. To the Roman governor, with his half-amused contempt for the tatterdemalion of a King that stood before him, and his scornful question, in the full flush of conscious, vulgar, material power, 'Art *Thou* a King, then?' He answered, 'To this end was I born'—that was all that Pilate could understand—'and for this cause came I into the world,' why was that added? Was it a synonym for being born? No! it was something that lay behind the birth. And, if I might venture to say so, Christ added to the former clause, which was level with Pilate's apprehension, the full explanation of the term, unusual on His lips, as a kind of satisfaction to His own consciousness, rather than for any enlightenment that it would bring to its original hearer, and because He could not,

even for a moment, adopt only language which might carry to some ears the inference that His birth was His beginning, or was as the birth of other men.

Now, brethren, I do not think that I am exaggerating anything in my interpretation of these three sayings, and therefore I make bold to say that when the Apostle Paul, in his intensely doctrinal fashion, talks about Jesus Christ being in the form of God, and not considering equality with God, as a thing to be eagerly grasped at, but emptying Himself, and being in the form of a servant; and found in fashion as a man; or when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, 'Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same'; or when John says 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,' they are saying nothing more than Jesus Christ had said about Himself. 'Back to Christ!' Yes! by all means; and back to the Christ who declared that He was before He was born; that He left the eternal, divine glory by His own act; that by His own volition He entered into the limitations of humanity, 'and was not ashamed'—why should a man be so?—to be called our brother.

So much, then, for the first of the lessons to be gathered from these great sayings. Let me, just in a sentence, refer to another. We find in these sayings clear indications of the world-wide significance which, in Christ's consciousness, attached to Himself and His work. I do not need to quote many of them. There are only two with which I will trouble you; one in which He says, 'I am the Light of *the world*, that whosoever believeth in Me might not abide in darkness'; and the other, in which He says, 'I came not to judge the *world*, but to save the *world*.' In His earthly

career He recognised His limitation as being 'not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' And yet His love and His prescient eye went out from the very beginning, as the synagogue in Nazareth witnesses, to the 'other sheep which are not of this fold'; to the lepers and the widows outside of Israel, and the whole race of mankind.

Think, think! 'the carpenter's Son,' with no name, with no culture, with no material force, in that little village hidden away amongst the hills in half-Gentile Galilee, standing up there, in that humble synagogue and saying, 'My mission is to humanity.' And think how nineteen centuries have vindicated what seemed an idle boast.

II. But, secondly, I find in these sayings collectively our Lord's conception of the purposes of His coming.

I gather them together as briefly as may be. 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.' 'The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' 'I am come, not to judge the world, but to save the world.' Salvation, then, is the purpose. Take another class. 'I am come that they might have life.' 'The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven that He may give life to the world.' Salvation, then, or the communication of life, is the purpose. Yet again, 'I am come, a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me may not abide in darkness.' Salvation, then, or the communication of life, or the flooding of the world with light, such are the purposes, as Jesus saw them, of His coming.

Think of the conception of humanity, that is, of you and me, and of my needs and yours, which underlies these solemn words—dead; in peril; famished; dark and

blind—that is humanity, as it presented itself before the meek Sage of Nazareth. And to deal with a humanity so full of desperate needs, and so utterly incapable of any kind of self-help, was the problem which this audacious young Rabbi grappled, and said that He had solved. That is tremendous. And not only is it tremendous, but it may come to us with a suggestion that we had better see whether the terms in which He described the world have any application to us, and, if so, what we mean to do. Christ looked below the surface. He regarded men mainly in their relation to God, and God's laws, and He beheld a universal pall spread over all nations, and every man as having come short of the glory of God.

Think, again, how in this declaration of purpose there lies the clearest consciousness of non-participation in that universal condition. He who comes and arrogates to himself the power and the right to deal with these necessities must himself be clear from all implication in them. Think of the consciousness of inexhaustible power, as well as the outgoing motion of a boundless love, which such a notion of His life's work proves Christ to have possessed. What a superb confidence in the healing power of His touch, in the exuberant abundance of vitality, by which He was able to breathe a soul beneath the ribs of all the corpses in the valley of dry bones! What an unfailing fountain of light there must have been in His own consciousness of Himself, that He should venture upon such words as these!

And again, I say, His tremendous claim to be able to save the world in the full sense of delivering from all moral and physical evil, and endowing with all moral and physical good, is verified by facts. He has

done it for some of us; He is doing it every day; and if He does not do it to the world, it is not because He has not the power, but because the world will not submit to the power.

Did Peter, or John, or Paul ever say more about His work than He said Himself? Are not their most rapturous sayings only the expansion and the setting forth of the ground and the consequences of His own statements? 'Back to Christ,' the Saviour, the Life-giver, and the Light-bringer.

III. Note, from these collective sayings, our Lord's conception of the manner in which the purpose of His life was to be discharged.

Again I summarise. 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' 'To this end came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth.' 'I am come to send fire on earth.' Now observe that these three last statements of the manner in which He discharges His work—viz. calling sinners to repentance, bearing witness to the truth, and sending fire on earth, are subordinate to the great purpose which was stated in the first of the passages quoted, 'the Son of Man is come . . . to give His life a ransom for many.' The calling of sinners to repentance, and the bearing witness to the truth, fall mainly under the ministering which He did upon earth. Sending fire on earth is, as His own words abundantly show, only possible as the result of His giving His life a ransom for many. And so we have to regard the manner of His effecting His purpose as falling into two great portions, whereof the one covers the earthly life of ministration, with all the gentle words that drew

publicans and harlots, and melted susceptible souls into a passion and a flood of repentance that needed not to be repented of, and with its witness to the truth by all the gracious words that came from His lips, and most chiefly by the witness of His life, which declared God to men, and revealed men to themselves.

But, side by side with that ministration by life, separable from it, and the shining apex of the great pyramid that was raised day by day, and deed by deed, stands His death as the 'ransom for many.' Brethren, conceptions of Christ's manner of saving the world which put all the emphasis on His witnessing to the truth, or on His gracious ministrations, or even upon His calling sinners to repentance, are truncated and incomplete; and, on the other hand, all these other forms of His activity are most fully operative in His death as our ransom on the Cross. For I would fain know what, in all the gentle beauty of His earthly life, has moulded and drawn hearts to self-abasement and a hearty hatred of, and turning from, their sins, like the pathos and the power of that death? and what, in all the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth, and in all the deeds of beauty with which He wrought for us the living example of duty, has so borne witness to the truth, as that same death? And what is it that kindled the fire of that swift Spirit, poured out upon the world's icy coldness, but the sacrifice which must needs precede it?

Therefore, unless we take the ransom as the chief part of the manner by which He saves the world, we do not go 'back to Christ,' nor accept His own estimate of Himself. If we do so accept, we must listen to Him saying, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up'; 'The

bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'

IV. Lastly, I find in these collective sayings our Lord's prevision of the issue of His work.

'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I am come, not to send peace, but a sword'; or, as another Evangelist has it less picturesquely, in the parallel passage, 'not peace, but rather division.' Again, His epilogue to the great story of the blind man who was made to see, and was then cast out by the blind men that would not see, is, 'for judgment am I come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

Jesus was under no illusions as to the issue of His work. Purpose is one thing; result is altogether another. The mission had but one intention, but it has a twofold consequence; because man's freewill comes in, and even infinite Love could not ensure that all men should accept the ransom from captivity, or all should be enkindled by the leaping fire of the divine Spirit. 'How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' That is the wail of thwarted Omnipotence; the tears of blood dropped by wounded, infinite Love. All through the ages the same issue is being realised; and it is being realised here and now. 'Some believed the word that was spoken, and some believed not.' Thus the aged Simeon's prophetic vision is fulfilled: 'This Child is set for the rise and fall of many in Israel.' Though the mission has one purpose it has a double result.

So let me urge on you, dear friends, to take Christ's words, and to take them all. There is no warrant for

the common practice of picking and choosing amongst them, and rejecting one of two sayings which come to us attested by precisely the same evidence, while we accept the other, on the ground that the one fits our notions and the other does not. 'All in all, or not at all,' should be our principle in dealing with the words of the Incarnate Truth.

As clearly as tongue can speak, He has asserted that He 'came forth from God, and came into the world.' That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of the Incarnation. As clearly as tongue can speak, He has asserted that the purpose of His coming is to save the lost, to vivify the dead, to 'give light to them that sit in darkness.' That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of man's sin and danger. As clearly as tongue can speak He has declared that the manner of His accomplishing His purpose is 'to minister,' 'to bear witness to the truth,' 'to call sinners to repentance,' 'to give His life a ransom for many.' That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of the Atonement. As clearly as tongue can speak He has asserted that after His Cross He will flood the world with fire. That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of an indwelling Spirit. As clearly as tongue can speak He has asserted that sight or blindness, life or death, depends on the reception or rejection of His words. That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of the tremendous issues of salvation or of loss, which hang on our listening to Him or our turning from Him.

And it is the reason why I venture, dear brethren, to come to you now, and as Christ's unworthy ambassador beseech you in His stead that you listen to Him.

God Himself has spoken from heaven: 'This is My

beloved Son; hear Him.' 'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh' to us still; 'for if they escaped not who turned away from Him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him that' now 'speaketh from heaven.'

THOU ART A SAMARITAN

'Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan!'—JOHN VIII. 48.

THE multitude is fond of nicknames, and usually invents them with some accuracy of insight. But its judgment of the worth of the characteristics which it discerns is generally unreliable, for it admires what is low, and scoffs at what is pure and noble. So the censure of the crowd is apt to be praise, and its praise blame.

Jesus Christ had His full share of such missiles. None of His followers have been called by worse names than was He. But the hostile taunts flung at Him are really tributes. Collectively they form a body of evidence as to His character and work, all the more valuable because it comes from His enemies and was supposed to be fatal to His claims. His opponents' caricatures present substantially the same face as is lovingly painted by the Evangelists. This name of Samaritan, for example, shows the maliciously distorted image of some facts in His teaching and conduct. The question in the text proves that the designation had been previously in common use, and its currency proves the general feeling of its appropriateness. If we ask how Jesus earned it, we are led straight to

some of the most glorious aspects of His character and work. Let us, then, take the guidance of His enemies, and use the help of their rancorous abuse to aid us in understanding what it was in Him which struck dull brains and malicious hearts so as to give occasion for this name.

There are three points especially which seem to me to be brought out by it. The name witnesses to Christ's prophet-like boldness of rebuke of national prejudices and national sins. It witnesses to what I may call, for want of a better word, His originality. And it witnesses to His universality. These three thoughts seem to me to be the truths which underlie my text. And with them for its meaning we may answer its question with, 'Yes, ye said well that He was a Samaritan.'

I. First, then, the name witnesses to Christ's prophet-like boldness in cutting against the grain of national prejudice, and in rebuking national sins.

The occurrence which gave occasion to my text may be taken as a specimen of a whole series of facts which underlie this name. Our Lord has just been rebuking the Jews for their sinfulness, denying that they are Abraham's seed, asserting that they do not belong to God, telling them to their faces that they are slaves and children of the Devil. And they, in their folly, think that no one who was a good Jew at heart could say such bitter things about the chosen people. They hear the tongue of an enemy in such words, and so they fiercely turn upon Him, 'Thou art a Samaritan!' They did not recognise the love that underlay the sternness, the throbbing of a heart that desired their good, and therefore warned them of their evil. Nations, like individuals, too often think that

the man becomes their enemy who tells them the truth. And these people, misunderstanding the impulse of the words, and feeling keenly their sharp edge, can only suppose that He is a bad Jew, and at heart an enemy to His race, who can speak thus.

The saying then points to one outstanding characteristic of our Lord's teaching—viz. to the sternness with which He denied all validity to the merely natural descent on which the whole nation prided itself. Because of mere physical origin they fancied themselves to be Heaven's favourites, and high above these 'dogs of the uncircumcision' round them; and here came one of themselves, saying, 'You are not Abraham's children unless you do the deeds of Abraham.'

Again, Christ depreciated as of no value the mere externalisms of worship. He made a clean sweep of Rabbinical casuistry. He turned a stream of cold water upon the excited Messianic hopes of worldly dominion which so fired their hearts with enthusiasm. He never spared the lash of condemnation for the sins that were rampant round Him, and His gentle voice rose into sternness when He spoke with tears, and yet with unfaltering confidence, of the certain fatal end of it all. And so this Man, running counter to national prejudices, keeping no terms with popular delusions, despising, and trying to make others despise, the lies which led the people away, had the charge flung at His head, 'Thou art a Samaritan,' which only meant that, prophet-like, He 'set the trumpet to His mouth, and declared to the house of Israel its transgression, and to Jacob his sin.'

My friends, the same fate attends all men who play the same part. A democracy demands flattery, and

public men are more and more abasing themselves to the degradation of ministering to the supposed wishes instead of cutting dead against the grain of the wishes, if necessary, in order to meet the true wants, of the people. Wherever some one strong man stands up to oppose the wild current of popular desires, he may make up his mind that the charge of being 'a bad citizen, unpatriotic, a lover of the enemies of the people,' will be flung at him. You Christian men and women have to face the same calumnies as your Master had. The rotten eggs flung at the objects of popular execration—if I might use a somewhat violent figure—turn to roses in their flight. The praises of good men and the scoffs of loose-living and godless ones are equally valuable certificates of character. The Church which does not earn the same sort of opprobrium which attended its Master has probably failed of its duty. It is good to be called 'gloomy' and 'sour-visaged' by those whose only notion of pleasure is effervescent immorality; and it is good to be called intolerant by the crowd that desires us to be tolerant of vice. So, my friends, I want you to understand that you, too, have to tread in the Master's steps. The 'imitation of Jesus' does not consist merely in the sanctities and secrecies of communion, and the blessings of a meek and quiet heart, but includes standing where He stood, in avowed and active opposition to widespread evils, and, if need be, in the protesting opposition to popular error. And if you are called nicknames, never mind! Remember what the Master said, 'They shall bring you before kings and magistrates'—the tribunal of the many-headed is a more formidable judgment-bench than that of any king—'and it shall turn to a testimony for you.'

II. Now, secondly, this name is the witness to what I venture to call, for want of a better term, the originality of Jesus Christ.

It bears witness to the dim feeling which onlookers had that in Him was a new phenomenon, not to be accounted for by birth and descent, by training and education, or by the whole of what people nowadays call environment. He did not come out of these circumstances. This is not a regulation pattern type of Jew. He is 'a Samaritan.' That is to say, He is unlike the people among whom He dwells; and betrays that other influences than those which shaped them have gone to the making of Him.

That is one of the most marked, outstanding, and important features in the teaching and in the character of Jesus Christ, that it is absolutely independent of, and incapable of being accounted for by, anything that He derived from the circumstances in which He lived. He was a Jew, and yet He was not a Jew. He was not a Samaritan, and yet He was a Samaritan. He was not a Greek, and yet He was one. He was not a Roman, nor an Englishman, nor a Hindoo, nor an Asiatic, nor an African; and yet He had all the characteristics of these races within Himself, and held them all in the ample sweep of His perfect Manhood.

If we turn to His teaching we find that, whilst no doubt to some extent it is influenced in its forms by the necessities of its adaptation to the first listeners, there is a certain element in it far beyond anything that came from Rabbis, or even from prophets and psalmists. Modern Christian scholarship has busied itself very much in these days with studying Jewish literature, so far as it is available, in order to ascertain how far it formed the teaching, or mind, of Jesus the

Carpenter of Nazareth. There is a likeness, but the likeness only serves to make the unlikeness more conspicuous. And I, for my part, venture to assert that, whilst the form of our Lord's teaching may largely be traced to the influences under which He was brought up, and whilst the substance of some parts of it may have been anticipated by earlier Rabbis of His nation, the crowd that listened to Him on the mountain top had laid their fingers upon the more important fact when they 'wondered at His teaching,' and found the characteristic difference between it, and that of the men to whom they had listened, in the note of authority with which He spoke. Jesus never argues, He asserts; He claims; and in lieu of all arguments He gives you His own 'Verily! verily! I say unto you.'

Thus not only in its form, but in its substance, in its lofty morality, in its spiritual religion, in its revelation of the Father and the Fatherhood for all men, Christ's teaching as teaching stands absolutely alone.

If we turn to His character, the one thing that strikes us is that about it there is nothing of the limitations of time or race which stamp all other men. He is not good after the fashion of His age, or of any other age; He is simply embodied and perfect Goodness. This Tree has shot up high above the fences that enclose the grove in which it grows, and its leaf lasts for ever.

Run over, in your mind, other great names of heroes, saints, thinkers, poets; they all bear the stamp of their age and circumstances, and the type of goodness or the manner of thought which belonged to these. Jesus Christ alone stands before men abso-

lutely free from any of the limitations which are essential in the case of every human excellence and teacher. And so He comes to us with a strange freshness, with a strange closeness; and nineteen centuries have not made Him fit less accurately to our needs than He did to those of the generation amidst which He condescended to live. Thickening mists of oblivion wrap all other great names as they recede into the past; and about the loftiest of them we have to say, 'This man, having served his generation, fell on sleep, and saw corruption.' But Jesus Christ lasts, because there is nothing local or temporary about His teaching or His character.

Now this peculiar originality, as I venture to call it, of Christ's character is a very strong argument for the truthful accuracy of the picture drawn of Him in these four Gospels. Where did these four men get their Christ? Was it from imagination? Was it from myth? Was it from the accidental confluence of a multitude of traditions? There is an old story about a painter who, in despair of producing a certain effect of storm upon the sea, at last flung his wet sponge at the canvas, and to his astonishment found that it had done the very thing he wanted. But wet sponges cannot draw likenesses; and to allege that these four men drew such a picture, in such compass, without anybody sitting for it, seems to me about the most desperate hypothesis that ever was invented. If there were no Christ, or if the Christ that was, was not like what the Gospels paint Him as being, then the authors of these little booklets are consummate geniuses, and their works stand at the very top of the imaginative literature of the world. It is more difficult to account for the Gospels, if they are not histories, than it is to

account for the Christ whom they tell us of if they are.

And then, further, there is only one key to the mystery of this originality. Christ is perfect man, high above limitations, and owing nothing to environment, because He is the Son of God. I would as soon believe that grass roots, which for years, in some meadow, had brought forth, season after season, nothing but humble green blades, shot up suddenly into a palm tree, as I would believe that simple natural descent brought all at once into the middle of the dull succession of commonplace and sinful men this radiant and unique Figure. Account for Christ, all you unbelievers! The question of to-day, round which all the battle is being fought, is the person of Jesus Christ. If He be what the Gospels tell us that He is, there is nothing left for the unbeliever worth a struggle. 'What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?' The Jews said, 'Thou art a Samaritan!' We say, 'Thou art the Christ; the Son of the living God!'

III. Lastly, the name bears witness to Christ's universality.

I presume that, in addition to what seemed His hostility to what was taken to be true Judaism, another set of facts underlay the name—viz. those which indicated His kindly relations with the people whom it was every good Jew's pleasant duty to hate with all his heart. The story of the Samaritan woman in John's Gospel, the parable of the good Samaritan, the incident of the grateful leper, who was a Samaritan, the refusal to allow the eager Apostles to bring down fire from heaven to consume inhospitable churls in a Samaritan village, were but outstanding specimens of

what must have been a characteristic of His whole career not unknown to His enemies. So they argued, 'If you love our enemies you must hate us; and you must be one of them,' thereby distorting, but yet presenting, what is the great glory of Christ's Gospel, and of Christ Himself, that He belongs to the world; and that His salvation, the sweep of His love, and the power of His Cross, are meant for all mankind.

That universality largely arises from the absence of the limitations of which I have already spoken sufficiently. Because He belongs to no one period as regards His character, He is available for all periods as regards His efficacy. Because His teaching is not dyed in the hues of any school or of any age or of any cast of thought, it suits for all mankind. This water comes clear from the eternal rock, and has no taint of any soil through which it has flowed. Therefore the thirsty lips of a world may be glued to it, and drink and be satisfied. His one sacrifice avails for the whole world.

But let me remind you that universality means also individuality, and that Jesus Christ is the Christ for all men because He is each man's Christ. The tree of life stands in the middle of the garden that all may have equal access to it. Is this universal Christ yours; thine? That is the question. Make Him so by putting out your hand and claiming your share in Him, by casting your soul upon Him, by trusting your all to Him, by listening to His word, by obeying His commands, by drinking in the fulness of His blessing. You can do so if you will. If you do not, the universal Christ is nothing to you. Make Him thine, and be sure that the sweep of His love and the efficacy of His sacrifice embrace and include thee. He is the

universal Christ; therefore He is the only Christ; 'neither is there salvation in any other.' Through Him all men, each man, thou, must be saved. Without Him all men, every man, thou, can not be saved. Take Him for yours, and you will find that each who possesses Him, possesses Him altogether, and none hinders the other in his full enjoyment of 'the bread of God which came down from heaven.'

EXPOSITIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D., Litt. D.

ST. JOHN

Chaps. IX to XIV

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ONE METAPHOR AND TWO MEANINGS

'I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day : the night cometh when no man can work.'—JOHN ix. 4.

'The night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.'—ROMANS xiii. 12.

THE contrast between these two sayings will strike you at once. Using the same metaphors, they apply them in exactly opposite directions. In the one, life is the day, and the state beyond death the night; in the other, life is the night, and the state beyond death the day. Remarkable as the contrast is, it comes to be still more so if we remember the respective speakers. For each of them says what we should rather have expected the other to say. It would have been natural for Paul to have given utterance to the stimulus to diligence caused by the consciousness that the time of work was brief; and it would have been as natural for Jesus, who, as we believe, came from God, from the place of the eternal supernal glory, to have said that life here was night as compared with the illumination that He had known. But it is the divine Master who gives utterance to the common human consciousness of a brief life ending in inactivity, and it is the servant who takes the higher point of view.

So strange did the words of my first text seem as coming from our Lord's lips, that the sense of incongruity seems to have been the occasion of the remarkable variation of reading which the Revised Version has adopted when it says 'We must work the works

of Him that sent Me.' But that thought seems to me to be perfectly irrelevant to our Lord's purpose in this context, where He is vindicating His own action, and not laying down the duty of His servants. He is giving here one of these glimpses, that we so rarely get, into His own inmost heart. And so we have to take the sharp contrast between the Master's thought and the servant's thought, and to combine them, if we would think rightly about the present and the future, and do rightly in the present.

I. Let me ask you to look at the Master's thought about the present and the future.

As I have already said, our Lord gives utterance here to the very common, in fact, universal human consciousness. The contrast between the intense little spot of light and the great ring of darkness round about it; between 'the warm precincts of the cheerful day' and the cold solitudes of the inactive night has been the commonplace and stock-in-trade of moralists and thoughtful men from the beginning; has given pathos to poetry, solemnity to our days; and has been the ally of base as well as of noble things. For to say to a man, 'there are twelve hours in the day of life, and then comes darkness, the blackness that swallows up all activity,' may either be made into a support of all lofty and noble thoughts, or, by the baser sort, may be, and has been, made into a philosophy of the 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die' kind; 'Gather ye roses while ye may'; 'A short life and a merry one.' The thought stimulates to diligence, but it does nothing to direct the diligence. It makes men work furiously, but it never will prevent them from working basely. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,' is a conclusion from the con-

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sideration that 'there is neither wisdom nor knowledge nor device in the grave whither we go,' but what the hand should find to do must be settled from altogether different considerations.

Our Lord here takes the common human point of view, and says, 'Life is the time for activity, and it must be the more diligent because it is ringed by the darkness of the night.' What precisely does our Lord intend by His use of that metaphor of the night? No figures, we know, run upon all-fours. The point of comparison may be simply in some one feature common to the two things compared, and so all sorts of mischief may be done by trying to extend the analogy to other features. Now, there are a great many points in which day and night may respectively be taken as analogues of Life and Death and the state beyond death. There is a 'night of weeping'; there is a 'night of ignorance.' But our Lord Himself tells us what is the one point of comparison which alone is in His mind, when He says, 'The night cometh, when no man can work.' It is simply the night as a season of compulsory inactivity that suggests the comparison in our text. And so we have here the presentation of that dear Lord as influenced by the common human motive, and feeling that there was work to be done which must be crowded into a definite space, because when that space was past, there would be no more opportunity for the work to be done.

Look at how, in the words of my first text, we have, as I said, a glimpse into His inmost heart. He lets us see that all His life was under the solemn compulsion of that great *must* which was so often upon His lips, that He felt that He was here to do the Father's will, and that that obligation lay upon Him

with a pressure which He neither could, nor would if He could, have got rid of.

There are two kinds of 'musts' in our lives. There is the unwelcome necessity which grips us with iron and sharpened fangs; the needs-be which crushes down hopes and dreams and inclinations, and forces the slave to his reluctant task. And there is the 'must' which has passed into the will, into the heart, and has moulded the inmost desire to conformity with the obligation which no more stands over against us as a taskmaster with whip and chain, but has passed within us and is there an inspiration and a joy. He that can say, as Jesus Christ in His humanity could, and did say: 'My meat'—the refreshment of my nature, the necessary sustenance of my being—'is to do the will of my Father'; that man, and that man alone, feels no pressure that is pain from the incumbency of the necessity that blessedly rules His life. When 'I will' and 'I choose' coincide, like two of Euclid's triangles atop of one another, line for line and angle for angle, then comes liberty into the life. He that can say, not with a knitted brow and an unwilling ducking of his head to the yoke, 'I must do it,' but can say, 'Thy law is within my heart,' that is the Christlike, the free, the happy man.

Further, our Lord here, in His thoughts of the present and the future, lets us see what He thought that the work of God in the world was. The disciples looked at the blind man sitting by the wayside, and what he suggested to them was a curious, half theological, half metaphysical question, in which Rabbinical subtlety delighted. 'Who did sin, this man or his parents?' They only thought of talking over the theological problem involved in the fact that, before

he had done anything in this world to account for the calamity, he was *born* blind. Jesus Christ looked at the man, and He did not think about theological cobwebs. What was suggested to Him was to fight against the evil and abolish it. It is sometimes necessary to discuss the origin of an evil thing, of a sorrow or a sin, in order to understand how to deal with and get rid of it. But unless that is the case, our first business is not to say, 'How comes this about?' but our business is to take steps to make it cease to come about. Cure the man first and then argue to your heart's content about what made him blind, but cure him first. And so Jesus Christ taught us that the meaning of the day of life was that we should set ourselves to abolish the works of the devil, and that the work of God was that we should fight against sin and sorrow, and in so far as it was in our power, abolish these, in all the variety of their forms, in all the vigour of their abundant growth. Sorrow and sin are God's call to every one of His sons and daughters to set themselves to cast them out of His fair creation; and 'the day' is the opportunity for doing that.

Our Lord here, as I have already suggested, shows us very touchingly and beautifully, how entirely He bore our human nature, and had entered into our conditions, in that He, too, felt that common human emotion, and was spurred to unhasting and yet un-resting diligence by the thought of the coming of the night. I suppose that although we have few chronological data in this Gospel of John, the hour of our Lord's death was really very near at that time. He had just escaped from a formidable attempt upon His life. 'They took up stones to stone Him, but He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.'

is the statement which immediately precedes the account of His meeting with this blind man. And so under the pressure, perhaps, of that immediate experience which revealed the depths of hatred that was ready for anything against Him, He gives utterance to this expression: 'If it be the case that the time is at hand, then the more need that, Sabbath day as it is, I should pause here.' Though the multitude were armed with stones to stone Him, He stopped in His flight because there was a poor blind man there whom He felt that He needed to cure. Beautiful it is, and drawing Him very near to us,—and it should draw us very near to Him—that thus He shared in that essentially human consciousness of the limitation of the power to work, by the ring of blackness that encircled the little spot of illuminated light.

But some will say, 'How is it possible that such a consciousness as this should really have been in the mind of Jesus Christ?' 'Did He not know that His death was not to be the end of His work? Did He not know, and say over and over again, in varying forms, that when He passed from earth, it was not into inactivity? Is it not the very characteristic of His mission that it is different from that of all other helpers and benefactors and teachers of the world, in that His death stands in the very middle of His work, and that on the one side of it there is activity, and on the other side of it there is still, and in some sense loftier and greater, activity?' Yes; all that is perfectly true, and I do not for a moment believe that our Lord was forgetting that the life on the earth was but the first volume of His biography, and of the records of His deeds, and that He contemplated them, as He contemplated always, the life beyond, as working in and

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on and over and through His servants, even unto the end of the world.

But you have only to remember the difference between the earthly and the heavenly life of the Lord fully to understand the point of view that He takes here. The one is the basis of the other; the one is the seedtime, the other is the harvest. The one has only the limited years of the earthly life, in which it can be done; the other has the endless years of Eternity, through which it is to be continued. And if any part of that earthly life of the Lord had been void of its duty, and of its discharge of the Father's will, not even He, amidst the blaze of the heavenly glory, could have thereafter filled up the tiny gap. All the earthly years were needed to be filled with service, up to the great service and sacrifice of the Cross, in order that upon them might be reared the second stage and phase of His heavenly life. With regard to the one, He said on the Cross, 'It is finished.' But when He died He passed not into the night of inactivity, but into the day of greater service. And that higher and heavenly form of His work continues, and not until 'the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ,' and the whole benefit and effect of His earthly life are imparted to the whole race of man, will it be said, 'It is done,' and the angels of heaven proclaim the completion of His work for man. But seeing that that work has its twofold forms, Jesus, like us, had to be conscious of the limitations of life, and of the night that followed the day.

II. And now turn, in the second place, to the servant's thought.

As I have already pointed out, it is the precise reversal

of the other. What to Christ is 'day' to Paul is 'night.' What to Christ is 'night' to Paul is 'day.' Now the first point that I would make is this, that the future would never have been 'day' to Paul if Jesus had not gone down into the darkness of the 'night.' I have said that there was only one point of comparison in our Lord's mind between night and death. But we may venture to extend the figure a little, and to say that the Light went into the 'valley of the shadow of Death,' and lit it up from end to end. The Life went into the palace of Death, and breathed life into all there. There is a great picture by one of the old monkish masters, on the walls of a Florentine convent, which represents the descent of Jesus to that dim region of the dead. Around Him there is a halo of light that shines into the gloomy corridor, up which the thronging patriarchs and saints of the Old Dispensation are coming, with outstretched hands of eager welcome and acceptance, to receive the blessing. Ah! it is true, 'the people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light; and to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, unto them hath the Light shined.' Christ the Light has gone down into the darkness, and what to Him was night He has made for us day. Just as Scripture all but confines the name of *death* to Christ's experience upon the Cross, and by virtue of that experience softens it down for the rest of us into the blessed image of *sleep*, so the Master has turned the night of death into the dawning of the day.

Further, to the servant the brightness of that future day dimmed all earth's garish glories into darkness. It was because Paul saw the Beyond flaming with such lustre that the nearer distance to him seemed to

v. 4] ONE METAPHOR: TWO MEANINGS 9

have sunk into gloom. Just as a man or other object between you and the western sky when the sun is there will be all dark, so earth with heaven behind it becomes a mere shadowy outline. The day that is beyond outshines all the lustres and radiances of earth, and turns them into darkness. You go into a room out of blazing tropical sunshine, and it is all gloom and obscurity. He whose eyes are fixed on the day that is to come will find that here he walks as one in the night.

And the brightness of that day, as well as the darkness of the present night, directed the servant as to what he should be diligent in. Since it is true that 'the day is at hand,' let us put on the armour of light, and dress ourselves in garb fitting for it. Since it is true that 'the night is far spent' let us put off the works of darkness.

III. And so that brings me to the last point, and that is the combination of the Master's and the servant's thought, and the effect that it should produce upon us.

It is not enough either for our hearts or our minds that we should say 'the night cometh when no man can work.' Life is day, but it is night also. Death is night but it is dawning as well. We cannot understand either the present or the future unless we link them together. That death which is the cessation of activity in one aspect, is, for Christ's servants, as truly as for Christ, the beginning of an activity in a higher and nobler form. I do not believe in a heaven of rest, meaning by that, inaction; I still less believe in a death which puts an end to the activity of the human spirit. I believe that this world is our school, our apprenticeship, the place where we learn our trade and exercise our faculties, where we paint the picture, as it were,

which we offer when we desire to be admitted to the great guild of artists, and according to the result of which, in the eye of the Judge, is our place hereafter. What the Germans call 'proof pieces'—that is the meaning of life. And though 'the night cometh when no man can work,' the day cometh when the characters we have made ourselves here, the habits we have cultivated and indulged in, the capacities we have exercised, and the set and drift of all our activity upon earth, will determine the work that we get to do there.

So then, stereoscoping these two thoughts, we get the solid image that results from them both. And it teaches us not only diligence, and thus supplies stimulus, but it determines the direction of our diligence, and thus supplies guidance. We ought to be misers of our time and opportunities. Jesus Christ said, 'I must work the work of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh.' How much more ought you and I to say so? And some of us ought very specially to say it, and to feel it, because the hour when we shall have to lay down our tools is getting very near, and the shadows are lengthening. If you had been in the fields in these summer evenings during the last few days, you would have seen the haymakers at work with more and more diligence as the evening drew on darker and darker. Dear friends, some of us are at the eleventh hour. Let us fill it with diligent work. The night cometh.

But my texts not only stimulate to diligence, but they direct the diligence. If it be that there is a day beyond, and that Christ's folk are 'the children of the day,' then 'let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.' We have to cast ourselves on

Him as our Saviour, to love Him as our Lord and Friend, to take Him as our Pattern and our Guide, our Help, our Light, and our Life. And then we shall neither be deceived by life's garish splendours nor oppressed by its gloom and its sorrow; we shall neither shrink from that last moment, as a night of inaction, nor be too eager to cast off the burden of our present work, but we shall cheerfully toil at what will prepare us for 'the day,' and the bell at night that rings us out of mill and factory will not be unwelcome, for it will ring us in to higher work and nobler service. The transition will be like one of those summer nights in the Arctic circle, when the sun does not dip. Through a little thin film of less light we shall pass into the perfect day, where 'the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof,' and 'there shall be no more night.'

THE SIXTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL—THE BLIND MADE TO SEE, AND THE SEEING MADE BLIND

'When Jesus had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spit, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, 7. And said unto him, Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.'—JOHN ix. 6, 7.

THE proportionate length at which this miracle and its accompanying effects are recorded, indicates very clearly the Evangelist's idea of their relative importance. Two verses are given to the story of the miracle; all the rest of the chapter to its preface and its issues. It was a great thing to heal a man that was blind from his birth, but the story of the gradual illumination of his spirit until it came to the full light of the percep-

tion of Christ as the Son of God, was far more to the Evangelist, and ought to be far more to us than giving the outward eye power to discern the outward light.

The narrative has a prologue and an epilogue, and the true point of view from which to look at it is found in the solemn words with which our Lord closes the incident. 'For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

So then the mere sign, important as it is, is the least thing that we have to look at in our contemplations now.

I. We have here our Lord unveiling His deepest motives for bestowing an unsought blessing.

It is remarkable, I think, that out of the eight miracles recorded in this Gospel, there is only one in which our Lord responds to a request to manifest His miraculous power; the others are all spontaneous.

In the other Gospels He heals sometimes because of the pleading of the sufferer; sometimes because of the request of compassionate friends or bystanders; sometimes unasked, because His own heart went out to those that were in pain and sickness. But in John's Gospel, predominantly we have the Son of God, who acts throughout as moved by His own deep heart. That view of Christ reaches its climax in His own profound words about His own laying down of His life: 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go unto the Father.' So, not so much influenced by others as deriving motive and impulse and law from Himself, He moves upon earth a fountain and not a reservoir, the Originator and the Beginner of the blessings that He bears.

And that is the point of view from which most strikingly the prologue of our narrative sets forth His action in the miracle here. 'As Jesus passed by,' says the story, 'He saw a man which was blind from his birth.' He fixes His eye upon him. No cry from the blind man's lips draws Him. He sits there unconscious of the kind eyes that were fastened upon him. The disciples stand at Christ's side, and have no share in His feelings. They ask Him to do nothing. To them the blind man is—what? A theological problem. No trace of pity touches their hearts. They do not even seem to have reckoned upon or expected Christ's miraculous intervention. And that is a very remarkable feature in the Gospels. At all events, they evidently do not expect it here; but all that the sight of this lifelong sufferer does in them is to raise a question, 'Who did sin; he or his parents?' Perhaps they do not quite see to the bottom of the alternative that they are suggesting; and we need not trouble ourselves to ask whether there was a full-blown notion of the pre-existence of the man's soul in their minds as they ask the question. Perhaps they remembered the impotent man to whom our Lord said, 'Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee.' And they may have thought that they had His sanction to the doctrine—as old as Job's friends—that wherever there was great suffering there must first have been great sin.

That is all that the sight of sorrow does for some people. It leads to censorious judgments, or to mere idle and curious speculations. Christ lets us see what it did for Him, and what it is meant to do for us. 'Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but he is born blind that the works of God may be made manifest in him.' That is to say, human sorrow is to be looked at

by us as an opportunity for the manifestation through us of God's mercy in relieving and stanching the wounds through which the lifeblood is ebbing away. Do not stand coldly curious or uncharitably censorious. Do not make miserable men theological problems, but see in them a call for service. See in them an opportunity for letting the light of God, so much of it as is in you, shine from you, and your hands move in works of mercy.

And then the Master goes on to state still more distinctly the law which dominated His life, and which ought to dominate ours: 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.' Then poor men's misery is an occasion for the love of God manifesting itself. Yes. But the love of God manifests itself through human media, through persons; and if we adopt the reading of these words which you will find in the Revised Version, and instead of saying '*I must work*,' read '*We must work*,' then we have Christ extending the law which ruled over His own life to all His followers, and making it supremely obligatory and binding upon each of us. He for His part, as I have said, moves through this Gospel as the Son of God, whose mercy, and all whose doings are self-originated. But the other side of that is that He moves through this Gospel in the humble attitude of filial obedience, ever recognising that the Father's will is supreme in His life; and that He is bound, with an obligation in which He rejoices, to do the will of Him that sent Him. The consciousness of a mission, the sense of filial obedience, the joyful surrender and harmonising of the will of the Son with the will of the Father; these things were the secret of the Master's life.

And coupled with them, even in Him there was the consciousness that time was short; and although beyond the Cross and the grave there stretched for Him an eternity in which He would work for the blessing of the world, yet the special work which He had to do, while wearing the veil and weakness of flesh, had but few days and hours in which it could be done. Therefore, as we ought to do, He worked under the limitations of mortality, and recognised in the brevity of life another call to eager and continuous service.

These were His motives which, in common with Him, we may share. But He adds another in which we have no share; and declares the unique consciousness which ever stirred Him to His self-manifesting and God-manifesting acts: 'As long as I am in the world I am the Light of the world.'

Thus, moved by sorrow, recognising in man's misery the dumb cry for help, seeing in it the opportunity for the manifestation of the higher mercy of God; taking all evil to be the occasion for a brighter display of the love and the good which are divine; feeling that His one purpose upon earth was to crowd the moments with obedience to the will, and with the doing of the works of Him that sent Him; and possessing the sole and strange consciousness that from His person streams out all the light which illuminates the world—the Christ pauses before the unconscious blind man, and looking upon the poor, useless eyeballs, unaware how near light and sight stood, obeys the impulse that shapes His whole life, 'and when He had spoken *thus*,' proceeds to the strange cure.

II. So we come, in the next place, to consider Christ as veiling His power under material means.

There is only one other instance in the Gospels

where a miracle is wrought in the singular fashion which is here employed, namely, the healing of the deaf-mute recorded in Mark's Gospel, where, in like manner, our Lord makes clay of the spittle, and anoints the ears of the deaf man with the clay. The variety of method in our Lord's miracles serves important purposes, as teaching us that the methods are nothing, and that He moved freely amongst them all, the real cause in every case being one and the same, the bare forth-putting of His will; and teaching us further that in each specific case there were reasons in the moral and religious condition of the persons operated upon for the adoption of the specific means employed, which we of course have no means of discovering. There is here, first then, healing by material means. The clay had no power of healing; the water of Siloam had no power of healing. The thing that healed was Christ's will, but He uses these externals to help the poor blind man to believe that he is going to be healed. He condescends to drape and veil His power in order that the dim eye, unaccustomed to the light, may look upon that shadowed representation of it when it could not gaze upon the pure brightness; as an eye may look upon a shaded lamp which could not bear its brilliance unsoftened and naked.

This healing by material means in order to accommodate Himself to the weak faith which He seeks to evoke, and to strengthen thereby, is parallel, in principle, to His own Incarnation, and to His appointment of external rites and ordinances. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, a visible Church, outward means of worship, and so on, all these come under that same category. There is no life nor power in them except His will works through them, but they are crutches

and helps for a weak and sense-bound faith to climb to the apprehension of the spiritual reality. It is not the clay, it is not the water, it is not the Church, the ordinances, the outward worship, the form of prayer, the sacrament—it is none of these things that have the healing and the grace in them. They are only ladders by which we may ascend to Him. So let us neither presumptuously antedate the time when we shall be able to do without them—the Heaven in ‘which there is no Temple’—nor grovellingly and superstitiously elevate them to a place of importance and of power in the Christian life which Christ never meant them to fill. He heals through material means; the true source of healing is His own loving will.

Further, He heals at a distance. We have here a parallel with the story of the nobleman’s son at Capernaum, which we have already considered. There, too, we have the same phenomenon, the healing power sent forth from the Master, and operating far away from His corporeal personal presence. This was a test of faith, as the use of the clay had been a help to faith. Still He works His healing from afar, because to Him there is neither near nor far. In His divine ubiquity, that Son of Man, who in His glorified manhood is at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, is here and everywhere where there are weakness and suffering that turn to Him; ready to help, ready to bless and heal. ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’

Our Evangelist sees in the very name of that fountain in which the man washed, a symbol which is not to be passed by. ‘Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam,’ which, says John, ‘is by interpretation, *Sent.*’ We have heard

already about the Pool of Siloam in this section of the Gospel. In Chapter vii. we read, 'In the last day, that great day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said, "If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink."' These words were probably spoken on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, on which one part of the ceremonial was the drawing, with exuberant rejoicing, of water from the Pool of Siloam, and bearing it up to the Temple. In these words Christ pointed to that fountain which rises 'fast by the oracles of God,' and wells up from beneath the hill, that on which the Temple is built, as being a symbol of Himself.

And here the Evangelist would have us suppose that, in like manner, the very name which the fountain bore (whether as being an outgush from beneath the Temple rock, or whether as being the gift of God) as applicable to Himself. The lesson to be learned is that the fountain in which we have to be cleansed 'from sin and from uncleanness,' whose waters are the lotion that will give eyesight to the blind, the true 'fountain of perpetual youth,' which men have sought for in every land, is Christ Himself. In Him we have the welling forth of the heart of God, the water of life, the water of gladness, the immortal stream of which 'whoso drinketh shall never thirst,' and which, touching the blind eyeballs, washes away obscuration and gives new power of vision.

III. Then, still further, we have here our Lord suspending healing on obedience.

'Go and wash.' As He said to the impotent man: 'Stretch forth thine hand'; as He said to the paralytic in this Gospel: 'Take up thy bed and walk'; so here He says, 'Go and wash.' And some friendly hand being stretched out to the blind man, or he himself feeling

his way over the familiar path, he comes to the pool and washes, and returns seeing.

There is a double lesson there, on which I have no need to dwell. There is, first, the general truth that healing is suspended by Christ on compliance with His conditions. He does not simply say to any man, Be whole. He could and did say so sometimes in regard to bodily healing. But He cannot do so as regards the cure of our blind souls. To the sin-sick and sin-blinded man He says, 'Thou shalt be whole, if'—or 'I will make thee whole, provided that'—what?—provided that thou goest to the fountain where He has lodged the healing power. The condition on which sight comes to the blind is compliance with Christ's invitation, 'Come to Me; trust in Me; and thou shalt be whole.'

Then there is a special lesson here, and that is, Obedience brings sight. 'If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine.' Are there any of you groping in darkness, compassed about with theological perplexities and religious doubts? Obey what you know. Do what you see clearly you ought to do. Bow your wills to the recognised truth. He who has turned all his knowledge into action will get more knowledge as soon as he needs it. 'Go and wash; and he went, and came seeing.'

IV. And now, lastly, we have here our Lord shadowing His highest work as the Healer of blind souls.

It is impossible for me to enter upon that wonderfully dramatic and instructive narrative which follows the account of the miracle, and describe the controversies between the sturdy, quick-witted, candid, blind man, and the narrow, bitter Pharisees. But just notice one or two points.

The two parties are evidently represented as types

of two contrasted classes. The blind man stands for an example of honest ignorance, knowing itself ignorant, and not to be coaxed or frightened or in any way provoked to pretending to knowledge which it does not possess; firmly holding by what it does know, and because conscious of its little knowledge, therefore waiting for light and willing to be led. Hence he is at once humble and sturdy, docile and independent, ready to listen to any voice which can really teach, and formidably quick to prick with wholesome sarcasm the inflated claims of mere official pretenders. The Pharisees, on the other hand, are sure that they know everything that can be known about anything in the region of religion and morality, and in their absolute confidence of their absolute possession of the truth, in their blank unconsciousness that it was more than their official property and stock-in-trade, in their complete incapacity to discern the glory of a miracle which contravened ecclesiastical proprieties and conventionalities, in their contempt for the ignorance which they were responsible for and never thought of enlightening, in their cruel taunt directed against the man's calamity, and in their swift resort to the weapon of excommunication of one whom it was much easier to cast out than to answer, are but too plain a type of a character which is as ready to corrupt the teachers of the Church as of the synagogue.

One cannot but notice how constantly the phrase 'We know' occurs. The parents of the man use it thrice. The Pharisees have it on their lips in their first interview with him: 'We know that this man is a sinner.' He answers, declining to affirm anything about the character of the Man Jesus, because he, for his part, 'knows not,' but standing firmly by the

solid reality which he 'knows,' in a very solid fashion, that his eyes have been opened. So we have the first encounter between knowledge which is ignorant, and ignorance which knows, to the manifest victory of the latter. Again, in the second round, they try to overbear the man's cool sarcasm with their vehement assertion of knowledge that God spake to Moses, but by the admission that even their knowledge did not reach to the determination of the question of the origin of Jesus' mission, lay themselves open to the sudden thrust of keen-eyed, honest humility's sharp rapier-like retort. 'Herein is a marvellous thing,' that you *Know-alls*, whose business it is to know where a professed miracle-worker comes from, 'know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes.' 'Now *we know*' (to use your own words) 'that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.'

Then observe how, on both sides, a process is going on. The man is getting more and more light at each step. He begins with 'a Man which is called Jesus. Then he gets to a 'prophet,' then he comes to 'a worshipper of God, and one that does His will.' Then he comes to, 'If this man were not of God,' in some very special sense, 'He could do nothing.' These are his own reflections, the working out of the impression made by the fact on an honest mind; and because he had so used the light which he had, therefore Jesus gives him more, and finds him with the question, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' Then the man who had shown himself so strong in his own convictions, so independent, and hard to cajole or coerce, shows himself now all docile and submissive, and ready to accept whatever Jesus says: 'Lord, who is He, that I might

believe on Him?' That was not credulity. He already knew enough of Christ to know that he ought to trust Him. And to his docility there is given the full revelation; and he hears the words which Pharisees and unrighteous men were not worthy to hear: 'Thou hast both *seen* Him—with these eyes to which I have given sight—and it is He that talketh with thee.' Then intellectual conviction, moral reliance, and the utter prostration and devotion of the whole man bow him at Christ's feet. 'Lord, I believe; and He worshipped Him.'

There is the story of the progress of an honest, ignorant soul that knew itself blind, into the illumination of perfect vision.

And as he went upwards, so steadily and tragically, downwards went the others. For they had light and they would not look at it; and it blasted and blinded them. They had the manifestation of Christ, and they scoffed and jeered at it, and turned their backs upon it, and it became a curse to them; falling not like dew but like vitriol on their spirits, blistering, not refreshing.

Therefore Christ pronounces their fate, and sums up the story in the solemn two-edged sentence: 'For judgment am I come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

The purpose of His coming is not to judge, but to save. But if men will not let Him save, the effect of His coming will be to harm. Therefore, His coming will separate men into two parts, as a magnet will draw all the iron filings out of a heap and leave the brass. He comes not to judge, but His coming does judge. He is set for the rise or for the fall of men,

and is 'a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

Light has a twofold effect. It is torture to the diseased eye; it is gladdening to the sound one. Christ is the light, as He is also both the power of seeing and the thing seen. Therefore, it cannot but be that His shining upon men's hearts shall judge them, and shall either enlighten or darken.

We all have eyes—the organs by which we may see 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.' We have all blinded ourselves by our sin. Christ is come to show us God, to be the light by which we see God, and to strengthen and restore our faculty of seeing Him. If you welcome Him, and take Him into your hearts, He will be at once light and eyesight to you. But if you turn away from Him He will be blindness and darkness to you. He comes to pour eyesight on the blind, but He comes therefore also, most assuredly, to make still blinder those who do not know themselves to be blind, and conceit themselves to be clear-sighted. 'I thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'

They who see themselves to be blind, who know themselves to be ignorant, the lowly who recognise their sinfulness and misery and helplessness, and turn in their sore need to Christ, will be led by paths of growing knowledge and blessedness to the perfect day where their strengthened vision will be able to see light in the blaze which to us now is darkness. They who say 'I see,' and know not that they are miserable and blind, nor hearken to His counsel to 'anoint their eyes with eye salve that they may see,' will have yet another film drawn over their eyes by the shining of the light which they reject, and will pass into darkness where

only enough of light and of eyesight remain to make guilt. Jesus Christ is for us light and vision. Trust to Him, and your eyes will be blessed because they see God. Turn from Him and Egyptian darkness will settle on your soul. 'To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away.'

THE GIFTS TO THE FLOCK

... By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'—JOHN X. 9.

ONE does not know whether the width or the depth of this marvellous promise is the more noteworthy. Jesus Christ presents Himself before the whole race of man, and declares Himself able to deal with the needs of every individual in the tremendous whole. 'If *any man*'—no matter who, where, when.

For all noble and happy life there are at least three things needed: security, sustenance, and a field for the exercise of activity. To provide these is the end of all human society and government. Jesus Christ here says that He can give all these to every one.

The imagery of the sheep and the fold is still, of course, in His mind, and colours the form of the representation. But the substance is the declaration that, to any and every soul, no matter how ringed about with danger, no matter how hampered and hindered in work, no matter how barren of all supply earth may be, He will give these, the primal requisites of life. 'He shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'

Now I only wish to deal with these three aspects of

the blessedness of a true Christian life which our Lord holds forth here as accessible to us all: security, the unhindered exercise of activity, and sustenance or provision.

I. First, then, in and through Christ any man may be saved.

I take it that the word 'saved' here is rather used with reference to the imagery of the parable than in its full Christian sense of ultimate and everlasting salvation, and that its meaning in its present connection might perhaps better be set forth by the rendering 'safe' than 'saved.' At the same time, the two ideas pass into one another; and the declaration of my text is that because, step by step, conflict by conflict, in passing danger after danger, external and internal, Jesus Christ, through our union with Him, will keep us safe, at the last we shall reach eternal and everlasting salvation. 'He will save us' by the continual exercise of His protecting power, 'into His everlasting kingdom.' There is none other shelter for men's defenceless heads and naked, soft, unarmed bodies except only the shelter that is found in Him. There are creatures of low grade in the animal world which have the instinct, because their own bodies are so undefended and impotent to resist contact with sharp and penetrating substances, that they take refuge in the abandoned shells of other creatures. You and I have to betake ourselves behind the defences of that strong love and mighty Hand if ever we are to pass through life without fatal harm.

For consider that, even in regard to outward dangers, union with Jesus Christ defends and delivers us. Suppose two men, two Manchester merchants, made bankrupt by the same commercial crisis; or two shipwrecked

sailors lashed upon a raft; or two men sitting side by side in a railway carriage and smashed by the same collision. One is a Christian and the other is not. The same blow is altogether different in aspect and actual effect upon the two men. They endure the same thing externally, in body or in fortune. The outward man is similarly affected, but the *man* is differently affected. The one is crushed, or embittered, or driven to despair, or to drink, or to something or other to soothe the bitterness; the other bows himself with 'It is the Lord! Let Him do what seemeth Him good.'

So the two disasters are utterly different, though in form they may be the same, and he that has entered into the fold by Jesus Christ is safe, not *from* outward disaster—that would be but a poor thing—but *in* it. For to the true heart that lives in fellowship with Jesus Christ, Sorrow, though it be dark-robed, is bright-faced, soft-handed, gentle-hearted, an angel of God. 'By Me if any man enter in, he shall be safe.'

And further, in our union with Jesus Christ, by simple faith in Him and loyal submission and obedience, we do receive an impenetrable defence against the true evils, and the only things worth calling dangers. For the only real evil is the peril that we shall lose our confidence and be untrue to our best selves, and depart from the living God. Nothing is evil except that which tempts, and succeeds in tempting, us away from Him. And in regard to all such danger, to cleave to Christ, to realise His presence, to think of Him, to wear His name as an amulet on our hearts, to put the thought of Him between us and temptation as a filter through which the poisonous air shall pass, and be deprived of its virus, is the one secret of safety and victory.

Real gift of power from Jesus Christ, the influx of His strength into our weakness, of some portion of the Spirit of life that was in Him into our deadness, is promised, and the promise is abundantly fulfilled to all men who trust Him when their hour of temptation comes. As the dying martyr, when he looked up into heaven, saw Jesus Christ 'standing at the right hand of God' ready to help, and, as it were, having started from His eternal seat on the Throne in the eagerness of His desire to succour His servant, so we may all see, if we will, that dear Lord ready to succour us, and close by our sides to deliver us from the evil in the evil, its power to tempt. If we could carry that vision into our daily life, and walk in its light, when temptation rings us round, how poor all the inducements to go away from Him would look!

There is a power in the remembrance of Jesus to slay every wicked thought; and the things that tempt us most, that most directly appeal to our worst sides, to our sense, our ambition, our pride, our distrust, our self-will, all these lose their power upon us, and are discovered in their emptiness and insignificance, when once this thought flashes across the mind—Jesus Christ is my Defence, and Jesus Christ is my Pattern and my Companion.

Oh, brother! do not trust yourself out amongst the pitfalls and snares of life without Him. If you do, the real evil of all evils will seize you for its own; but keep close to that dear Lord, and then 'there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.' The hidden temptation thou wilt pass by without being harmed; the manifest temptation thou wilt trample under foot. 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the

destruction that wasteth at noonday.' Hidden and known temptations will be equally powerless; and in the fold into which all pass by faith in Christ thou shalt be safe. And so, kept safe from each danger and in each moment of temptation, the aggregate and sum of the several deliverances will amount to the everlasting salvation which shall be perfected in the heavens.

Only remember the condition, 'By Me if any man enter in.' That is not a thing to be done once for all, but needs perpetual repetition. When we clasp anything in our hands, however tight the initial grasp, unless there is a continual effort of renewed tightening, the muscles become lax, and we have to renew the tension, if we are to keep the grasp. So in our Christian life it is only the continual repetition of the act which our Lord here calls 'entering in by Him' that will bring to us this continual exemption from, and immunity in, the dangers that beset us.

Keep Christ between you and the storm. Keep on the lee side of the Rock of Ages. Keep behind the breakwater, for there is a wild sea running outside; and your little boat, undecked and with a feeble hand at the helm, will soon be swamped. Keep within the fold, for wolves and lions lie in every bush. Or, in plain English, live moment by moment in the realising of Christ's presence, power, and grace. So, and only so, shall you be safe.

II. Now, secondly, note, in Jesus Christ any man may find a field for the unrestricted exercise of his activity.

That metaphor of 'going in and out' is partly explained to us by the image of the flock, which passes into the fold for peaceful repose, and out again

without danger, for exercise and food; and is partly explained by the frequent use, in the Old Testament and in common conversation, of the expression 'going out and in' as the designation of the two-sided activity of human life. The one side is the contemplative life of interior union with God by faith and love; the other, the active life of practical obedience in the field of work which God provides for us. These two are both capable of being raised to their highest power, and of being discharged with the most unrestricted and joyous activity, on condition of our keeping close to Christ, and living by the faith of Him.

Note, then, 'He shall go in.' That comes first, though it interferes with the propriety of the metaphor, since the previous words already contemplate an initial 'entering in by Me, the Door.' That is to say, that, given the union with Jesus Christ by faith, there must then, as the basis of all activity, follow very frequent and deep inward acts of contemplation, of faith, and aspiration, and desire. You must go into the depths of God through Christ. You must go into the depths of your own souls through Him. You must become accustomed to withdraw yourselves from spreading yourselves out over the distractions of any external activity, howsoever imperative, charitable, or necessary, and live alone with Jesus, 'in the secret place of the Most High.' It is through Him that we have access to the mysteries and innermost shrine of the Temple. It is through Him that we draw near to the depths of Deity. It is through Him that we learn the length and breadth and height and depth of the largest and loftiest and noblest truths that concern the spirit. It is through Him that we become familiar with the inmost secrets of our own selves. And only

they who habitually live this hidden and sunken life of solitary and secret communion will ever do much in the field of outward work. Christians of this generation are far too much accustomed to live only in the front rooms of the house, that look out upon the street; and they know very little—far too little for their soul's health, and far too little for the freshness of their work and its prosperity—of that inward life of silent contemplation and expectant adoration, by which all strength is fed. Do not keep all your goods in the shop windows, and have nothing on your shelves but dummies, as is the case with far too many of us to-day. Remember that the Lord said first, 'He shall go in,' and unless you do you will not be 'saved.'

But then, further, if there have been, and continue to be, this unrestricted exercise through Christ of that sweet and silent life of solitary communion with Him, then there will follow upon that an enlargement of opportunity, and power for outward service such as nothing but emancipation by faith in Him can ever bring. Howsoever, by external circumstances, you and I may be hampered and hindered, however often we may feel that if something outside of us were different, the development of our active powers would be far more satisfactory, and we could do a great deal more in Christ's cause, the true hindrance lies never without, but within; and it is only to be overcome by that plunging into the depths of fellowship with Him. And then, if we carry with us into the field of work, whether it be the commonplace, dusty, tedious, and often repulsive duties of our monotonous business; or whether it be the field of more distinctly unselfish and Christian service—if we carry with us into all places where we go to labour, the sweet thought of His presence of His

example, of His love, and of the smile that may come on His face as the reward of faithful service, then we shall find that external labour, drawing its pattern, its motive, its law, and the power for its discharge, from communion with Him, is no more task-work nor slavery; and even 'the rough places will be made smooth, and the crooked things will be made straight,' and distasteful work will be made at least tolerable, and hard burdens will be lightened, and the things that are 'seen and temporal' will shimmer into transparency, through which will shine out the things that are unseen and eternal.'

Some of us are constitutionally made to prefer the one of these forms of Christian activity; some of us to prefer the other. The tendencies of this generation are far too much to the latter, to the exclusion of the former. It is hard to reconcile the conflicting claims, and I know of no better way to hit the just medium than by trying to keep ourselves always in touch with Jesus Christ, and then outward labour of any sort, whether for the bread that perishes or for His kingdom and righteousness, will never become so absorbing but that in it we may have our hearts in heaven, and the silent hour of communion with Him will never be so prolonged as to neglect outward duties. There was a demoniac boy in the plain, and therefore it was impossible to build tabernacles on the Mount of Transfiguration. But the disciples that had not climbed the Mount were all impotent to cast out the demoniac boy. We, if we keep near to Jesus Christ, will find that through Him we can 'go in and out,' and in both be pursuing the one uniform purpose of serving and pleasing Him. So shall be fulfilled in our cases the Psalmist's prayer, that 'I may dwell in the house of

the Lord all the days of my life, to behold His beauty, and to inquire in His Temple.' .

III. Lastly, in Jesus Christ **any man may receive sustenance.** 'They shall find pasture.'

The imagery of the sheep and the fold is still, of course, present to the Master's mind, and shapes the form in which this great promise is set forth.

I need only remind you, in illustration of it, of two facts, one, that in Jesus Christ Himself all the true needs of humanity are met and satisfied. He is 'the Bread of God that came down from heaven to give life to the world.' Do I want an outward object for my intellect? I have it in Him. Does my heart feel with its tendrils, which have no eyes at the ends of them, after something round which it may twine, and not fear that the prop shall ever rot or be cut down or pulled up? Jesus Christ is the home of love in which the dove may fold its wings and be at rest. Do I want (and I do if I am not a fool) an absolute and authoritative command to be laid upon my will; some one 'whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells'? I find absolute authority, with no taint of tyranny, and no degradation to the subject, in that Infinite Will of His. Does my conscience need some strong detergent to be laid upon it which shall take out the stains that are most indurated, inveterate, and ingrained? I find it only in the 'blood that cleanseth from all sin.' Do my aspirations and desires seek for some solid and substantial and unquestionable and imperishable good to which, reaching out, they may be sure that they are not anchoring on cloudland? Christ is our hope. For all this complicated and craving commonwealth that I carry within my soul, there is but one satisfaction, even Jesus Christ Himself. Nothing else nourishes the

whole man at once, but in Him are all the constituents that the human system requires for its nutriment and its growth in every part. So in and through Christ we find 'pasture.'

But beyond that, if we are knit to Him by simple and continual faith, love, and obedience, then what is else barrenness becomes full of nourishment, and the unsatisfying gifts of the world become rich and precious. They are nought when they are put first, they are much when they are put second.

I remember when I was in Australia seeing some wretched cattle trying to find grass on a yellow pasture where there was nothing but here and there a brown stalk that crumbled to dust in their mouths as they tried to eat it. That is the world without Jesus Christ. And I saw the same pasture six weeks after, when the rains had come, and the grass was high, rich, juicy, satisfying. That is what the world may be to you, if you will put it second, and seek first that your souls shall be fed on Jesus Christ. Then, and only then, will what is else water be turned by His touch and blessing into wine that shall fill the great jars to the brim, and be pronounced by skilled palates to be the good wine. 'I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be. There shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.'

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

'I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. 15. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.'—JOHN x. 14, 15.

'I AM the Good Shepherd.' Perhaps even Christ never spoke more fruitful words than these. Just think how many solitary, wearied hearts they have cheered, and what a wealth of encouragement and comfort there has been in them for all generations. The little child as it lays itself down to sleep, cries—

'Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb to-night,'

and the old man lays himself down to die murmuring to himself, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' 'I am the Good Shepherd.' No preaching can do anything but weaken and dilute the force of such words, and yet, though in all their sweet, homely simplicity they appeal to every heart, there are great depths in them that are worth pondering, and profound thoughts that need some elucidation.

There are three points to be noticed—First, the general force of the metaphor, and then the two specific applications of it which our Lord Himself makes.

I. First of all, then, let me say a few words as to the general application of the metaphor. The usual notion of these words confines itself to the natural meaning, and runs out into very true, but perhaps a little sentimental, considerations, laying hold of what is so plain on the very surface that I need not spend any

time in speaking about it. Christ's pattern is my law; Christ's providence is my guidance and defence—which in the present case means Christ's companionship—is my safety, my sustenance—which in the present case means that Christ Himself is the bread of my soul. The Good Shepherd exercises care, which absolves the sheep from care, and in the present case means that my only duty is meek following and quiet trust. 'I am the Good Shepherd'—here is guidance, guardianship, companionship, sustenance—all responsibility laid upon His broad shoulders, and all tenderness in His deep heart, and so for us simple obedience and quiet trust.

Another way by which we get the whole significance of this symbol is by noticing how the idea is strengthened by the word that accompanies it. Christ does not say 'I am a Shepherd,' but He says, 'I am *the good Shepherd*.' At first sight that word 'good' is interpreted, as I have said, in a kind of sentimental, poetic way, as expressing our Lord's tenderness and love and care; but I do not think that is the full meaning here. You find up and down this Gospel of St. John phrases such as, 'I am the true bread,' 'I am the true vine,' and the meaning of the word that is here translated 'good' is very nearly parallel with that idea. The true bread, the true vine, the true Shepherd—which comes to this, to use modern phraseology, that Jesus Christ, in His relation to you and me, fulfils all that in figure and shadow is represented to the meditative eye by that lower relationship between the material shepherd and his sheep. That is the picture, this the reality. There is another point to be made clear, and that is, that whilst the word 'good' is perhaps a fair enough representation

of that which is employed by our Lord, there is a special force and significance attached to the original, which is lost in our Bible. I do not know that it could have been preserved; but still it is necessary to state it. The expression here is the one that is generally rendered 'fair,' or 'lovely,' or 'beautiful,' and it belongs to the genius of that wonderful tongue in which the New Testament is written that it has a name for moral purity, considered as being lovely, the highest goodness, and the serenest beauty, which was what the old Greeks taught, howsoever little they may have practised it in their lives. And so here the thought is that *the* Shepherd stands before us, the realisation of all which that name means, set forth in such a fashion as to be infinitely lovely and perfectly fair, and to draw the admiration of any man who can appreciate that which is beautiful, and can admire that which is of good report.

There is another point still in reference to this first view of the text. Our Lord not only declares that He is the reality of which the earthly shepherd is the shadow, and that He as such is the flawless, perfect One, but that He alone is the reality. 'I am the Good Shepherd; in Me and in Me alone is that which men need.' And that leads me to another point which must just be mentioned, that we shall not reach the full meaning of these great words without taking into account the history of the metaphor in the Old Testament. Christ gives a second edition of the figure, and we are to remember all that went before. 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want'; 'Thou leddest Thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.' These are but specimens of a continuous series of utterances in the old Revelation in which Jehovah Himself is the

Shepherd of mankind; and there is also another class of passages of which I will quote one or two. 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, and carry them in His arms.' 'Awake, O sword, against the Man who is my fellow; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.' There were, we should remember, two streams of representation, according to the one of which God Himself was the Shepherd of Israel, and according to the other of which the Messiah was the Shepherd; and here, as I believe, Jesus lays His hand on both the one and the other, and says: 'They are Mine, and they testify of Me.' So sweet, so gracious are the words, that we lose the sense of the grandeur of them, and need to think before we are able to understand how great and immense the claim that is made here upon our faith, and that this Man stands before us and arrogates to Himself the divine prerogative witnessed from of old by psalmist and prophet, and says that for Him were meant the prophecies of ancient times that spake of a human shepherd, and asserts that all the sustenance, care, authority, command, which the emblem suggests meet in Him in perfect measure.

II. Now let us turn to the two special points which our Lord emphasises here, as being those in which His relation as the Good Shepherd is most conspicuously given. The language of my text runs: 'I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father.' Our Western ways fail to bring out the full meaning of the emblem; but all Eastern travellers tell us what a strange bond of sympathy and loving regard, and docile recognition, springs up between the shepherd and his sheep away there in the Eastern

pastures and deserts; and how he knows every one, though to a stranger's eye they are so like each other; and how even the dumb instincts and the narrow intelligence of the silly sheep recognise the shepherd, and will not be deceived by shepherd's garments worn to deceive, and will not follow the voice of a stranger.

But we must further note that Christ lays hold of the dumb instincts of the animal, as illustrating, at the one end of the scale, the relation between Him and His followers, and lays hold of the communion between the Father and the Son at the other end of the scale, as illustrating the same thing. 'I know My sheep.' That is a knowledge like the knowledge of the shepherd, a bond of close intimacy. But He does not know them by reason of looking at them and thinking about them. It is something far more blessed than that. He knows me because He loves me; He knows me because He has sympathy with me, and I know Him, if I know Him at all, by my love, and I know Him by my sympathy, and I know Him by my communion. A loveless heart does not know the Shepherd, and unless the Shepherd's heart was all love He would not know His sheep. The Shepherd's love is an individualised love. He knows His flock as a flock because He knows the units of it, and we can rest ourselves upon the personal knowledge, which is personal love and sympathy, of Jesus Christ. 'And My sheep know Me'—not by force of intellect, not by understanding certain truths, all-important as that may be, but by having our hearts harmonised in Him, and our spirits put into sympathy and communion with Him. 'They know Me,' and rest comes with the knowledge; 'they know Me,' and in that knowing is the best answer to all doubt and fear. They are exposed

to danger, but in the fold they can go quietly to rest, for they know that He is at the door watching through all dangers.

III. Turn for a moment to the last point, 'I lay down My life for the sheep.' I have said that our Western ways fail to bring out fully the element of the metaphor which refers to the kind of sympathy between the shepherd and the sheep; and our Western life also fails to bring out this other element also. Shepherds in England never have need to lay down their life for the sheep. Shepherds in Palestine often did, and sometimes do. You remember David with the lion and the bear, which is but an illustration of the reality which underlies this metaphor. So, then, in some profound way, the shepherd's death is the sheep's safety. First of all, look at that most unmistakable, emphatic—I was going to say vehement, at any rate, intense—expression of the absolute voluntariness of Christ's death, 'I lay down My life,' as a man might strip off a vesture. And this application of the metaphor is made all the stronger by the words which follow: 'Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' We read, 'Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered,' but here, somehow or other, the smiting of the Shepherd is not the scattering but the gathering of the flock. Here, somehow or other, the dead Shepherd has power to guard, to guide, to defend them. Here, somehow or other, the death of the Shepherd is the security of the sheep; and I say to you, the flock, that for every soul the entrance into the flock of God is through the door of the dying

Christ, who laid down His life for the sheep, and makes them His sheep who trust in Him.

‘OTHER SHEEP’¹

‘Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock and one Shepherd.’
—JOHN X. 16 (R. V.).

THERE were many strange and bitter lessons in this discourse for the false shepherds, the Pharisees, to whom it was first spoken. But there was not one which would jar more upon their minds, and as they fancied, on their sacredest convictions, than this, that God’s flock was wider than God’s fold. Our Lord distinctly recognises Judaism with its middle wall of partition as a divine institution, and then as distinctly carries His gaze beyond it. To His hearers ‘this fold,’ their own national polity, held all the flock. Without were dogs, a doleful land, where ‘the wild beasts of the desert met with the wild beasts of the islands.’ And now this new Teacher, not content with declaring them hirelings, and Himself the only true Shepherd of Israel, breaks down the hedges and speaks of Himself as the Shepherd of men. No wonder that they said, ‘He hath a devil and is mad.’

During His earthly life our Lord, as we know, confined His own personal ministry for the most part to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Not exclusively so, for He made at least one journey into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, teaching and healing; a Syro-Phœnician woman held His feet, and received her request; and one of His miracles, of feeding the multitude, was wrought for hungry Gentiles. But while His work

¹ Preached before the Baptist Missionary Society.

was in Israel, it was for mankind; and while 'this fold,' generally speaking, circumscribed His toils, it did not confine His love nor His thoughts. More than once world-wide declarations and promises broke from His lips, even before the final universal commission, 'Preach the Gospel to every creature.' 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' 'I am the Light of the world.' These and other similar sayings give us His lofty consciousness that He has received 'the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.' Parallel with them in substance are the words before us, which, for our present purpose, we may regard as containing lessons from our Lord Himself of how He looked and would have us look on the heathen world, on His work and ours, and on the certain issues of both.

I. We have here Christ teaching us how to think of the heathen world.

Observe that His words are not a declaration that all mankind are His sheep. The previous verses have distinctly defined a class of men as possessing the name, and the succeeding ones reiterate the definition, and with equal distinctness exclude another class. 'Ye believe not, because ye are not My sheep as I said unto you.' His sheep are they who know Him and are known of Him. Between Him and them there is a communion of love, a union of life, and a consequent reciprocal knowledge, which transcends the closest intimacies of earthly life, and finds its only analogue in that deep and mysterious oneness which subsists between the Father, who alone knoweth the Son, and the only begotten Son, who being ever in the bosom of the Father, alone knoweth Him and revealeth Him to us. 'I know My sheep and am known of Mine;

as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father. They hear My voice and follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life.' Such are the characteristics of that relation between Christ and men by which they become His sheep. It is such souls as these whom our Lord beholds in the wasteful wilderness. He is speaking not of a relation which all men bear to Him by virtue of their creation, but of one which *they* bear to Him who believe in His name.

Now this interpretation of the words does by no means contradict, but rather presupposes and rests upon the truth that all mankind come within the love of the divine heart, that He died for all, that all may be the subjects of His mediatorial kingdom, recipients of the offered mercy of God in Christ, and committed to the stewardship of the missionary Church. Resting upon these truths, the words of our text advance a step further and contemplate those who 'shall hereafter believe on Me.' Whether they be few or many is not the matter in hand. Whether at any future time they shall include all the dwellers upon earth is not the matter in hand. That every soul of man is included in the adaptation and intention and offer of the Gospel is not the matter in hand. But this is the matter in hand, that Jesus Christ in that moment of lofty elevation when He looked onwards to giving His life for the sheep, looked outwards also, far afield, and saw in every nation and people souls that He knew were His, and would one day know Him, and be led by Him 'in green pastures and beside still waters.'

But where or what were they when He spoke? He does not mean that already they had heard His voice and were following His steps, and knew His love, and

had received eternal life at His hand. This He cannot mean, for the plain reason that He goes on to speak of His 'bringing' them and of their 'hearing,' a work yet to be done. It can only be, then, that He speaks of them thus in the fullness of that divine knowledge which 'calls things that are not as though they were.' It is then a prophetic word which He speaks here.

We have only to think of the condition of the civilised heathendom of Christ's own day in order to feel the force of our text in its primary application. While the work of salvation was being prepared for the world in the life and death of our Lord, the world was being prepared for the tidings of salvation. Everywhere men were losing their faith in their idols, and longing for some deliverer. Some had become weary of the hollowness of philosophical speculation, and, like Pilate, were asking 'What is truth?' whilst, unlike Him, they waited for an answer, and will believe it when it comes from the lips of the Incarnate wisdom. Such were the Magi who were led by their starry science to His cradle, and went back to the depths of the Eastern lands with a better light than had guided them thither. Such were not a few of the early Christian converts, who had long been seeking hopelessly for goodly pearls, and had so been learning to know the worth of the One when it was offered to them. There were men who had been long sickening with despair amidst the rottenness of decaying mythologies and corrupting morals, and longing for some breath from heaven to blow health to themselves and to the world, and had so been learning to welcome 'the rushing mighty wind' when it came in power. There were simple souls, without as well as within the chosen people, waiting for the Consolation, though they knew not whence it

was to come. There were many who had already learned to believe that 'salvation is of the Jews,' though they had still to learn that salvation is in Jesus. Such were that Æthiopian statesman who was poring over Isaiah when Philip joined him, the Roman centurion at Cæsarea whose prayers and alms came up with acceptance before God, these Greeks of the West who came to His cross as the Eastern sages to His cradle, and were in Christ's eyes the advance guard and first scattered harbingers of the flock who should come flying for refuge to Him lifted on the Cross, 'like doves to their windows.' The whole world showed that the fullness of time had come; and the history of the early years of the Church reveals in how many souls the process of preparation had been silently going on. It was like the flush of early spring, when all the buds that had been maturing and swelling in the cold, burst, and the tender flowers that had been reaching upwards to the surface in all the hard winter laugh out in beauty, and a green veil covers all the hedges at the first flash of the April sun.

Not only these were in our Lord's thoughts when He saw His sheep in heathen lands. There were many who had no such previous preparation, but were plunged in all the darkness, nor knew that it was dark. Not only those wearied of idolatry, and dissatisfied with creeds outworn, but the barbarous people of Illyricum, the profligates of Corinth, hard rude men like the jailer at Philippi, and many more were before His penetrating eye. He who sees beneath the surface, and beyond the present, beholds His sheep where men can only see wolves. He sees an Apostle in the blaspheming Saul, a teacher for all generations in the African Augustine while yet a sensualist and a

Manichee, a reformer in the eager monk Luther, a poet-evangelist in the tinker Bunyan. He sees the future saint in the present sinner, the angel's wings budding on many a shoulder where the world's burdens lie heavy, and the new name written on many a forehead that as yet bears but the mark of the beast, and the number of His name.

And the sheep whom He sees while He speaks are not only the men of that generation. These mighty words are world-wide and world-lasting. The whole of the ages are in His mind. All nations are gathered before His prophetic vision, even as they shall one day be gathered before His judgment throne, and in all the countless mass His hand touches and His love clasps those who to the very end of time shall come to His call with loving faith, shall follow His steps with glad obedience.

Thus does Christ look out upon the world that lay beyond the fold. I cannot stay to do more than refer in passing to the spirit which the words of our text breathe. There is the lofty consciousness that He is the Leader and Guide, the Friend and Helper of all, that He stands solitary in His power to bless. There is the full confidence that the earth is His to its uttermost border. There is the clear vision of the sorrowful condition of these heathen people, without a shepherd and without a fold, wandering on every high mountain and dying in every thirsty land where there is no water. There are the tenderest pity and yearning love for them in their extremity. There is the clear assurance that they will come and be blessed in Him. I pass by all the other thoughts, which naturally found themselves on these words, in order to urge the one which is most appropriate to our present engagement. Let

us, dear brethren, take Christ as our pattern in our contemplations of the heathen world.

He has set us the example of an outgoing look directed far beyond the limits of the existing churches, far beyond the point of present achievement. We are but too apt to circumscribe our operative thoughts and our warm sympathies within the circle of our sight, or of our own personal associations. Our selfishness and our indolence affect the objects of our contemplations quite as much as they do the character of our work. They vitiate both, by making ourselves the great object of both, and by weakening the force of both in a ratio that increases rapidly with the increasing distance from that favourite centre. It is but a subtle form of the same disease which keeps our thoughts penned within the bounds of any fold, or limited by the progress already achieved. For us the whole world is the possession of our Lord, who has died to redeem us. By us the whole ought to be contemplated with that same spirit of prophetic confidence which filled Him when He said, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' To press onwards, 'forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before,' is the only fitting attitude for Christian men, either in regard to the gradual purifying of their own characters, or in regard to the gradual winning of the world for Christ. We ought to make all past successes stepping-stones to nobler things. The true use of the present is to reach up from it to a loftier future. The distance beckons; well for us if it do not beckon us in vain. We have yet to learn the first lesson of our Master's spirit, as expressed in these words, if we have not become familiar with the pitying contemplation of the wastes beyond

the fold, nor fixed deep in our minds the faith that the amplitude of its walls will have to be widened with growing years till it fills the world. The cry echoes to us from of old, 'Lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left.' We take the first step to respond to the summons when we make the 'regions beyond' one of the standing subjects of our devout thoughts, and take heed of supposing that the Church as we know it, has the same measurement which the man with the golden rod has measured for the eternal courts of Jerusalem, that shall be the joy of the whole earth. The very genius of the Gospel is aspiring. It is content with nothing short of universality for the sweep, and eternity for the duration, and absolute completeness for the measure, of its bestowments on man. We should be like men on a voyage of discovery, whose task is felt to be incomplete until headland after headland that fades in the dim distance has been rounded and surveyed, and the flag of our country planted upon it. After each has been passed another arises from the water, onwards we must go. There is no pause for our thoughts, none for our sympathy, none for our work, till our keels have visited, and the 'shout of a King' has been heard on every shore that fills 'the breadth of Thy land, O Emmanuel!' The limits of the visible community of Christ's Church to-day are far within the borders to which it must one day stretch. It is for us, taught by His words, to understand that we are yet as it were but encamped by Jericho, and at the beginning of the campaign. Ai and Bethhoron, and many a fight more are before us yet. The camp of the invaders, when they lay around the city of palm-trees, with the mountains in front and

the Jordan behind, was not more unlike the settled order of the nation when it filled the land, than the ranks of Christ's army to-day are to the mighty multitudes that shall one day name His name, and follow His banner. Let us live in the future, and lay strongly hold on the distant; for both are our Lord's, and by so doing we shall the better do our Master's work in the present, and at hand.

He has set us the example of a *penetrating gaze* into heathenism, which reveals beneath its monotonous miseries, the souls that are His. We ought to look on every field of Christian effort with the assurance that in it there are some who will hear His voice. As it was when He came, so it is ever and everywhere. The world is being prepared for the Gospel. In some broad regions, faith in idolatry is dying out, and the moral condition of the people is undergoing a slow elevation. Individuals are being weaned from their gods, they know not how, and they will not know why till they hear of Christ. He sees in every land where the Gospel is being taken—'a people prepared for the Lord.' He sees the gold gleaming in the crevices of the caves, the gems, rough and unpolished, lying in the matrix. He looks not merely on the great mass of idolaters, but He sees the single souls who shall hear. It is for us to look on the same mass with confidence caught from His. Neither apathetic indifference nor faint-hearted doubt should be permitted to weaken our hands. The prospect may seem very dark, the power of the enemy very great, our resources very inadequate; but let us look with Christ's eye, we shall know that everywhere we may hope to find a response to our message. Who they may be, we know not. How many they may be, we know not. How they may be guided by Him, they

know not. But He knows all. We may know that they are there. And as we cannot tell who they are but only that they are, we are bound to cherish hopes for all—the most degraded and outcast of our race. We have no right to give up any field or any man as hopeless. Christ's sheep will be found coming out of the midst of wolves and goats. Darkness may cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but if we look upon it as Christ did, and as He would have us to look, we shall see lights flickering here and there in the obscurity, which shall burst out into a blaze. The prophetic eye, the boundlessly hopeful heart, the strong confidence that in every land where He is preached there will be those who shall hear—these are what He gives us when He says, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.'

There is one other thought connected with these words which may be briefly referred to. It is that even now, in all lands where the Gospel has been preached, there are those whom Christ has received, although they have no connection with His visible Church.

There are many goats within the fold. There are many sheep without it. Even in lands where the Gospel has long been preached, we do not venture to identify profession by Church fellowship with living union with Christ. Much more is this true of our missionary efforts, and the apparent converts whom they make. The results that appear are no measure of the results that have actually been accomplished. We often hear of men who had caught up some stray word in a Bengali market-place, or received a tract by the roadside from some passing missionary, and who, having carried away the seed in their hearts, had long been living as Christians remote from all

churches and unknown by any. We can easily conceive that timidity in some cases, and distance in others, swell the ranks of these secret disciples. Though they follow not the footsteps of the flock, the Shepherd will lead them in their solitude. There will be many more names in the Lamb's book of life, depend upon it, than ever are written on the roll-calls of our churches, or in missionary statistics. The shooting stars that yearly fill our sky are visible to us for a moment, when their orbit passes into the lighted heavens, and then they disappear in the shadow of the earth. But astronomers tell us that they are always there though to us they seem to blaze but for a moment. We cannot see them, but they move on their darkling path and have a sun round which they circle. So be sure that in many heathen lands there are believing souls, seen by us but for an instant and then lost, who yet fill their unseen place, and move obedient round the Sun of Righteousness. Their names on earth are dark, but when the manifestation of the sons of God shall come, they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever. Our work has results beyond our knowledge now. When the Church, the Lamb's wife, shall lift up her eyes at the end of the days, prophecy tells us that she shall wonder to see her thronging children, whom she had never known till then, and will say, 'Who hath begotten me these? Behold I was left alone. These, where had they been?' These were God's hidden ones, nourished and brought up beyond the pale of the outward Church, but brought at last to share her triumph, and to abide at her side. 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.'

What confidence then, what tender pity, what hope

should fill our minds when we look on the heathen world! We must never be contented with present achievements. We are committed to a task which cannot end till all the world hears the joyful sound and is blessed by walking in the light of His countenance. When the great Roman Catholic missionary, the Apostle of the East, was lying on his dying bed among the barbarous people whom he loved, his passing spirit was busy about his work, and, even in the article of death, while the glazing eye saw no more clearly and the ashen lips had begun to stiffen into eternal silence, visions of further conquests flashed before him, and his last word was '*Amplius*'—*Onward!* It ought to be the motto of the missionary work of us, who boast a purer faith, to carry to the heathen and to fire our own souls. If ever we are tempted to repose, to despondency, to rest and be thankful when we number up our work and our converts, let us listen to His voice as it speaks in that supreme hour when He beheld the vision of the Cross, and beyond it that of a gathered world: '*Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.*'

We have here—

II. Christ teaching us how to think of His work and ours.

'*Them also I must bring.*' A necessity is laid upon Him, which springs at once from that divine work which is the law of His life, and from His own love and pity. The means for accomplishing this necessary work are implied in the context, as in other parallel Scriptural sayings, to be His propitiatory death. The instrumentality employed is not only His own personal agency on earth, nor only His throned rule on the right hand of God with power over the Spirit of holiness, but also the work of His

Church, and His work through them. Of that He is mainly speaking when He says, 'Them also I must bring.' Here, then, are some truths which ought to underlie and shape as well as animate our efforts for heathenism.

And first, remember that the same sovereign necessity which was laid on Him presses on us.

The 'Spirit of life' which was in Christ had its 'law,' which was the will of God. That shaped all His being, and He set us the example of perfectly clear recognition of, and perfect obedience to it, from the first moment when He said, 'I must be about My Father's business,' to the last, when He sighed forth, 'Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.' Hence the frequent sayings setting forth His work as determined by an imperative 'must,' which, whether it be alleged in reference to some apparently small or to some manifestly great thing in His life, is always equally imperative, and whether it seem to be based on the need for the fulfilment of some prophetic word, or on the proprieties and congruities of sonship, reposes at last on the will of God. His final words on the Passover night, before he went out to Gethsemane in the moonlight, contain the influence which moulded His whole earthly life, 'As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.'

And this divine will constitutes for Him the deepest ground of the necessity in the case before us. The eternal counsels of God had willed that 'all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of the Lord'; therefore, whatever the toils and the pains, the loss and the death, He, whose meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him, must give Himself to the task, nor rest till, one by one, the weary wanderers

are brought back on His shoulders and folded in His love.

In all which, let us remember, Jesus Christ is our pattern, not in His work for the salvation of men, but in the spirit in which He did His work. The solemn law of duty before which He bowed His head is a law for us also. The authoritative imperative which He obeyed has power over us. If we would have our lives holy and strong, wise and good, we must have 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, making us free from the law of sin and death,' for the obedience to the higher law enfranchises from slavery to the lower, and all other authority ceases over us when we are Christ's men. We are bound to service directed to the same end as His—even the salvation of the world. The same voice which says to Him, 'I will give Thee for a light to the Gentiles,' says to us, 'Ye are My witnesses, and My servant whom I have chosen.' The same Will which hath constituted Him the anointed Prophet, says of us, 'Touch not Mine anointed and do My prophets no harm.' We are redeemed that we may show forth God's praises. Not for ourselves alone, nor for purposes terminating in our own personal acceptance with God, or the perfecting of our own characters, priceless as these are, but for ends which affect the world has God had mercy on us. We are bought with a price that we may be the servants of God. We have received that we may give forth,

'God doth with us, as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves.'

'Arise, shine, for thy light is come.'

This missionary work of ours, then, is not one that can be taken up and laid down at our own pleasure. It is no excrescence, or accidental outgrowth of the

Church's life. We are all too apt to think of it as an extra, a kind of work of supererogation, which those may engage in who have a liking that way, and which those who do not care about it may leave alone, and no harm done. When shall we come to feel deeply, constantly, practically, that it must be done, and that we are sinning when we neglect it? Dear brethren, have we laid on our hearts and consciences the solemn weight of that necessity which moulded His life? Have we felt the awful power of God's plainly spoken will, driving us to this task? Do we know anything of that spirit which hears ever-pealing in our ears that awful commandment, 'Go, go to all the world, preach, preach the Gospel to every creature?' God commands us to take the trumpet, and if we would not soil our souls with gross and palpable sin, we must set it to our lips and sound an alarm, that by His grace shall wake the sleepers, and make the hoary walls of the robber-city that has afflicted the earth for so many weary millenniums, rock to their fall, that the redeemed of the Lord may pass over and set the captives free.

If we felt this as we ought, surely our consecration would be more complete, and our service more worthy. A clear conviction of God's will pointing the path for us, is, in all things, a wondrous help to vigorous action, to calmness of heart, and thus to success. In this mighty work, it would brace us for larger efforts, and fit us for larger results. It would simplify and deepen our motives, and thus evolve from them nobler deeds and purer sacrifices. To all objections from so-called prudence, to all calculations from sparse results, to all cavils of onlookers who may carp and seek to hinder, we should have one all-sufficient answer. It is not for

us to bandy arguments on such points as these. We care nothing for difficulties, for discouragements, for cost. We may think about these till we lose all the manly chivalry of Christian character, like the Apostle who gazed on the white crests of the angry breakers flashing in the pale moonlight, till he forgot who stood on the storm, and began to sink in his great fear. A nobler spirit ought to be ours. The toil is sore, the sacrifices many, and the yield seems small. Be it so! To all such thoughts we have one answer—Oh! that we felt more its solemn power!—such is the will of God. We are doing as we are bid, and we mean to go on. ‘Them also must I bring,’ says the Master. ‘Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me if I preach not the Gospel,’ echoes the Apostle. Let us, in the consecration of resolved hearts, and in trembling obedience to the divine will, add our choral Amen, and in the face of all the paralysing suggestions of our own selfishness, and all the tempting voices of worldly wisdom and unbelieving scornfulness that would stay our enterprise, let us fling back the grand old answer, ‘Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’

We must not forget, however, that it was no abhorrent toil to which Christ reluctantly consented. But in this case, as always with Him, the words of prophecy were true. ‘I delight to do Thy will.’ The schism between law and choice had no existence for Him; and when He says that He must bring the wandering sheep into the fold, He means not more because of God’s will than because of His own yearning desire to pour out the treasures of His mercy.

So it ought to be with us. Our missionary work

should not be degraded beneath the level of duty indeed, but neither should it be left on that level. We ought not only to be led to it by a power without, but impelled by an energy within. If we would be like our Master, we must know the necessity arising from our own heart's promptings, which leads us to work for Him. He has very imperfectly caught the spirit of the Gospel who has never felt the word as a fire in his bones, making him weary of forbearing. If we only take to this work because we are bid, and without sympathy for men, and longing desire to bring them all to Him who has blessed us, we may almost as well leave it alone. We shall do very little good to anybody, to ourselves little, to the world less. That our own hearts may teach us this necessity, we must live near our Master, and know His grace for ourselves. In proportion as we do, we shall be eager to proclaim it, and not stand idling in a corner of the market-place, till some unmistakable order sends us into the vineyard, but go for the relief of our own feelings. 'This is a day of good tidings, and we cannot hold our peace,' said the poor lepers in the camp to one another. The same feeling that we must tell the good news just because we know it, and it will make our brethren glad, is part of the Christian character. A blessed necessity, then, is laid upon us. A blessed work is given us, which brings with it at once the joy of obedience to our Father's will, and the joy of gratifying a deep instinct of our nature. 'Them also must I bring,' said the Saviour, because He loved men. 'To me who am less than the least of all saints, is this *grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches,' echoes the Apostle. Let us live in the light of our Lord's eye, and drink deep of His spirit, till the task

becomes a grace and privilege, not a burden, and till silence and idleness in His cause shall be felt to be impossible, because it would be violence to our own feelings, and the loss of a great joy as well as sin against our Father's will.

Consider again, by what means the sheep are to be brought to Christ? The context distinctly answers the question. There His propitiatory death is emphatically set forth as the power by which it is to be accomplished. The verse before our text says, 'I lay down My life for the sheep'; that after our text says, 'Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life.' It is the same connection of means and end as appears in the wonderful words with which He received the Greeks who came up to the feast, and heard the great truth, for want of which their philosophy and art came to nothing. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone'—'I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me.'

Yes, brethren! the Cross of Christ, and it alone, gathers men into a unity; for it alone draws men to Christ. His death, as our propitiation, effects such a change in the aspects of the divine government, and in the incidence of the divine justice, that 'we who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.' His death, as the constraining motive of life in the hearts which receive it, draws them away from their own ways by the cords of love, and binds them to Him. His death is His purchase of the gifts of that divine Spirit for the rebellious, who now convinces the world and endows the Church, 'till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' The First Begotten from the dead is therefore the prince of all the kings of the earth, and He so rules among the

nations as to bring the world to Himself. The philosophy of history lies in the words, 'Other sheep I have; them also I must bring.'

Christian missions abundantly prove that the Cross and the proclamation of the Cross have this power, and that nothing else has. It is not the ethics of Christianity, nor the abstract truths which may be deduced from its story, but it is the story of the suffering Redeemer that gives it its power over human hearts, in all conditions, and climates, and stages of culture. The magnetism of the Cross alone is mighty enough to overcome the gravitation of the soul to sin and the world. We hear much nowadays about a new reformation which is to be effected on Christianity, by purifying it of its historical facts and of its repulsive sacrificial aspect. When this is done, and the pure spiritual ideas are disengaged from their fleshly garb, then, we are told, will be the apotheosis and glorification of Christ. This will be the real lifting up from the earth; this will draw all men. Aye, and when this is done what will be left? Christianity will be purified back again into a vague Deism, which one would have thought had proved itself toothless and impotent, centuries ago. Spiritualising will turn out to be very like evaporating, the residuum will be a miserably unsatisfactory something, near akin to nothing, and certainly incapable either of firing its disciples with a desire to spread their faith, if we may call it so by courtesy, or of drawing men to itself. A Christianity without a Sacrifice on the altar will be a Christianity without worshippers in the Temple. The King of Kings who rides forth conquering is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood. The Christian Emperor saw in the heavens the Cross, with the legend: 'In

this sign thou shalt conquer!' It is an emblem true for all time. The Cross is the power unto salvation. The races scattered on the earth have often sought to make for themselves a rallying-point, and their attempts at union have become Babels, centres of repulsion and confusion. God has given us the Centre, the Tree of life in the midst. The crucified Saviour is the Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign for the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and resting beneath the shadow of the Cross be at peace. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.'

Once more our Lord teaches us here to identify the work of the Church with His own. What His servants do for Him He does, for from Him they derive the power to do it, and from Him comes the blessing which makes it effectual. He works in us, He works with us, He works for us. He works *in* us. We have the grace of His Spirit to touch our hearts and sanctify us for service. He puts it into the wills and desires of His Church to consecrate themselves to the task. He teaches them sympathy and self-devotion. He breathes world-wide aspirations into them. He raises up men to go forth. He works *with* us, helping our weakness, enlightening our ignorance, directing our steps, giving power to the student at his dry task of grammar and dictionary, being mouth and wisdom to them that speak in His name, touching the hearts of them that hear. In our basket He puts the seed-corn; the furrows of the field He makes soft with showers, and when it is sown He blesses the springing thereof. He works *for* us, opening doors among the nations, ordering the courses of providence, and holding His hand around His servants, so that they are immortal till their work is done; and can ever lift up thankful

voices to Him who leads them joyful captives at His own triumphal car, as it rolls on its stately march, scattering the sweet odours of His name wherever the long procession sweeps through the world. We neither go a warfare at our own charges, nor in our own might. He will fight with us, and He will pay us liberally at the last. When we count up our own resources, do not we often leave Christ out of the reckoning? Do we not measure our strength against the enemies', and forget that one weak man, plus Christ, is always in the majority? 'It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of My Father which speaketh in you.' 'I laboured, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' So helped, so inspired, we are wrong to despond; we are wrong not to expect great things and attempt great things; we are wrong not to dare, we are wrong to do the work of the Lord negligently. Let us feel that Christ's work is ours, and we shall be bowed beneath the solemnity of the thought, shall accept joyfully the necessity. Let us feel that our work is Christ's, and we shall rejoice in infirmity that His power may rest upon us, shall bid adieu to faint-hearted fears, and be sure that then it must prosper. 'Arise, O Lord! plead Thine own cause.' Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but to Thy name give glory.

'The Lord ascended into Heaven and sat on the right hand of God, and they went everywhere preaching the word.' It seems a strange contrast between the rest of the Lord, sitting in sublime expectancy of conscious power till His enemies become His footstool, and the toils of His scattered disciples. It is like that moment which the genius of the great painter has caught in an immortal work, when Jesus in rapt

communion with the mighty dead, and crowned with the accepting word from Heaven, floated transfigured above the Holy Mount, while below His disciples wrestled impotently with the demon that would not be cast out. But it is not really contrast. He has not so parted the toils as that His are over ere ours begin. He has not left His Church militant to bear the brunt of the battle while the Captain of the Lord's host only watches the current of the heady fight—like Moses from the safe mountain. The Evangelist goes on to tell us that the Lord also was working with them and sharing their toils, lightening their burdens, preparing for them successes on earth, and a rest like His when He shall gird Himself and serve them. Thus, the first time that the heavens opened again to mortal eyes after they closed on His ascending form, was to show Him to the martyr in the council chamber, not sitting careless or restful, but *standing* at the right hand of God, to intercede for, to strengthen, to receive and glorify His dying servant. He goes with us where we go, and through our works and gifts and prayers, through our proclamation of the Cross, He worketh His will, and shall finally accomplish that great necessity laid upon Him by the Father's counsels, and upon us by His commandment, and to be effected by His death, that He should die, not for that nation only, but also that He should gather together in one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

We have here—

III. Our Lord teaching us how to think of the certain issues of His work and ours.

'They shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.' We may regard these words as embracing two things; a nearer issue, namely, the

response that will always attend His call ; and a more remote, namely, the completion of His work. There is, of course, a very blessed sense in which the latter words are true now, and have been ever since Paul could say to those who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, 'He hath made both one. Now, therefore, ye are no more foreigners but fellow-citizens with the saints.' But the fold which now exists, limited in numbers, with its members but partially conscious of their unity, and surrounded by those who follow hireling shepherds, does not exhaust these great words. They shall not be accomplished till that far-off future have come.

But for the present we have the predictions of the former clause, 'They shall hear My voice.' What manner of expectations does it teach us to cherish? It seems to speak not of universal reception of Christ's message, but of some as hearing and some as forbearing. It teaches us to look for divers results attending our missionary work. There will always be a Dionysius the Areopagite, the woman Lydia, the kindly barbarians, the conscience-stricken jailer. There will always be the scoffers, who mock when they hear of 'Jesus and the resurrection'; the hesitating who compound with conscience by promising to hear again of this matter, the fierce opponents who invoke constituted authorities or mob violence to crush the message.

Again, the words seem to contemplate a long task. There is nothing about the rate at which His Kingdom shall spread, not a syllable to answer inquiries as to when the end shall come. The whole tone of the language suggests the idea that bringing back the sheep is to take a long time, and to cost many :

tedious journey into the wilderness. Not a sudden outburst, but a slow kindling of the flame, is what our Lord teaches us here to expect.

But while thus calm in tone and moderate in expectation, the words breathe a hope as confident as it is calm, as clear as it is moderate. There will always be a response. His voice shall never be lifted up in the snow-storm or lonely hillsides only to be blown back into His own ears, unheard and unheeded. Be they few or many, they shall hear. Be the toil longer or shorter, more or less severe, it shall not be in vain.

And to these expectations we shall do wisely if we attune ours. Omit from your hopes what your Lord has omitted from His promises; do not ask what He has not told. Do not wonder if you encounter what He met, for the disciple is not greater than his Master, and only if they have kept My saying will they keep yours also. But, on the other hand, expect as much as He has prophesied; accept it when it comes as the fruit of His work, not of yours, and build a firm faith that your labour shall not be in vain on these calm and prescient words.

So much for the course of the kingdom. And what of the end? One by one the sheep have been brought, at last they are all gathered in, not a hoof left behind. The stars steal singly into their places in the heavens as the darkness deepens, and He 'bringeth them forth by number,' until at the noon of night the sky is crowded with their lights, and 'for that He is great in power, not one faileth.' What expectations are we here taught to cherish then of the final issue?

Mark, to begin with, that there is implied the ulti-

mate universality of His dominion and sole supremacy of His throne. There is to be but one Shepherd, and over all the earth a great unity of obedience to Him. Here is the knell of all authority that does not own Him, and the subordination of all that does. The hirelings, the blind guides, that have misled and afflicted humanity for so many weary ages, shall be all sunk in oblivion. The false gods shall be dis-crowned, and lie shattered on their temple-sill, and there shall be no worshippers to care for or to try to repair their discomfiture. Bow your heads before Him, thinkers who have led men on devious paths and spoken but a partial truth and a wisdom all confused with foolishness! Lower your swords before Him, warriors who have builded your cities on blood and led men like sheep to the slaughter! He is more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. Cast your crowns before Him, princes and all judges of the earth, for He is King by right of the crown of thorns! This is the Lord of all—Teacher, Leader, Ruler of all men. All other names shall be forgotten but His shall abide. If they have been shepherds who would not come in by the door, a ransomed world shall rejoice over their fall with the ancient hymn, ‘Other gods beside Thee have had dominion over us; they are dead, they shall not live, Thou hast destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.’ If they have been subject to the chief Shepherd and ensamples to the flock, they will rejoice to decrease before His increase, and having helped to bring the Bride to the Bridegroom, will gladly stand aside and be forgotten in the perfect love that enters into full fruition at the last. Then when none contest nor intercept the reverential obedience that the whole

world brings to Him, shall be fulfilled the firm promise which declared long ago: 'I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He will feed them and be their Shepherd.'

Mark again the blessed nature of the relation between Christ and all men which is here foretold. From of old, the shepherd has been in all nations the emblem of kingly power, of leadership of every sort. How often the fact has contradicted the symbol let history tell. But with Jesus the reality does not only contradict, but even transcends, the tender old comparison. He rules with a gentle sway. His sceptre is no rod of iron, but the shepherd's crook, and the inmost meaning of its use is that it may 'comfort' us, as David learned to feel. There gather round the metaphor all thoughts of merciful guidance, of tender care, of a helping arm when we are weak, of a loving bosom where we are carried when we are weary. It speaks of a seeking love that roams over every high hill till it finds, and of a strong shoulder that bears us back when He has found. It tells of sweet hours of rest in the hot noontide by still waters, of ample provision for all the soul's longings in green pastures. It speaks of footsteps that go before, in which men may follow and find them ways of pleasantness. It speaks of gentle callings by name which draw the heart. It speaks of defence when lion and bear come ravening down, and of safe couching by night when the silent stars behold the sleeping sheep and the wakeful shepherd. He Himself gives its highest significance to the emblem, in the words of this great discourse, when He fixes on His knowledge, His calling of His sheep, His going before them, His giving His life for them. Such are the gracious blessings which here He teaches us to think

of as possessed in the happy days that shall be, by all the world.

And, on the other hand, the symbol speaks of confiding love in the hearts of men, of a great peacefulness of meek obedience stilling and gladdening their wills, of the consciousness of His perfect love, and the knowledge of all His gracious character, of sweet answering communion with Him, of safety from all enemies, of freedom, of familiar passage in and out to God. Thus knit together shall be the one fold and the one Shepherd. 'They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite them, for He that hath mercy on them shall feed them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.'

Mark again what a vision is here given of the relations of men with one another.

They are to be all gathered into a peaceful unity. They are to be one because they all hearken to one voice. It is to be observed that our Lord does not say, as our English Bible makes Him say, that there is to be one fold. He drops that word of set purpose in the latter clause of our text, and substitutes for it another, which may perhaps be best rendered flock. Why this change in the expression? Because, as it would seem, he would have us learn that the unity of that blessed future time is not to be like the unity of the Jewish Church, a formal and external one. That ancient polity was a fold. It held its members together by outward bonds of uniformity. But the universal Church of the future is to be a flock. It is to be really and visibly one. But it is to be so, not because it is hemmed in by one enclosure, but because it is to

be gathered round one Shepherd. The more closely they are drawn to Him, the more near will they be to each other. The centre in which all the radii meet keeps them all in their places. 'We being many are one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread.' In the ritual of the Old Covenant, the great golden candlestick with its seven branches stood in the court of the Temple, emblem of the formal oneness of the people, which was meant to be the light of the Lord to a dark world. In the vision of the New Covenant, the seer in Patmos beheld not the one lamp with its branches, but the seven golden candlesticks, which were made into a holier and a freer unity because the Son of Man walked in their midst—emblem of the oneness in diversity of the peoples, who were sometimes darkness, but shall one day be light in the Lord. There may continue to be national distinctions. There may or there may not be any external unity. But at all events our Lord turns away our thoughts from the outward to the inward, and bids us be sure that though the folds be many the flock shall be one, because they shall all hear and follow Him.

The words, however, suggest for us the blessed thought of the peaceful relations that shall then subsist among men. The tribes of the earth shall couch beside each other like the quiet sheep in the fold, and having learned of His great meekness, they shall no more bite nor devour one another. Alas! alas! the words seem too good to be true. They seem long, long of coming to pass. Ever since they were spoken the old bloody work has been going on, and the old lusts of the human heart have been busy sowing the dragon's teeth that shall spring up in wars and fightings. In savage lands warfare rages on, ceaseless, ignoble, unrecorded, and seemingly purposeless as that of animal-

cules in a drop of water. On civilised soil, men, who love the same Christ and worship Him in the same tongue, are fronting each other at this hour. The war of actual swords, and the war of conflicting creeds, and the jostling of human selfishness in the rough road of life, are all around us, and their seeds are within ourselves. The race of men do not live like folded sheep, rather like a flock of wolves, who first run over and then devour their weaker fellows.

But here is a fairer hope, and it will be fulfilled when all evil thoughts, and all selfish desires, and all jealous grudgings shall vanish from men's hearts, as unclean spirits at cockerow, and shall leave them, self-forgetful, yielding of their own prerogatives, desirous of no other man's, abhorrent of inflicting, and patient of receiving wrong. There will be no fuel then to blow into sulphurous flame, though all the blasts from hell were to fan the embers. But peace and concord shall be in all men, for Christ shall be in all. National distinctions may abide, but national enmities—the oldest and deepest, shall disappear. There shall still be Assyria, and Egypt, and Israel, but their former relation will be replaced by a bond of amity in their common possession of Him who is our peace. 'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.' God be thanked! that though we see, and our fathers have seen, so much that seems to contradict our hopes of a peaceful world, and though to-day the hell-hounds of war are baying over the earth, and though nowhere can we see signs even of the approach of the halcyon time, yet we can wait

for the vision, knowing that it will come at the appointed time, when

'No war or battle's sound
Is heard the world around,
The idle spear and shield are high uphung;
The trumpet speaks not to the armed throng,
And Kings sit still, with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by.'

Such are the thoughts which our Lord would teach us as to the present and as to the future of our missionary work. For the one, moderate expectations of success, not unchequered by disappointment, and a brave patience in long toil. For the other, hopes which cannot be too glowing, and a faith which cannot be too obstinate. The one is being fulfilled in our own and our brethren's experience even now; we may be therefore all the more sure that the other will be so in due time. If we look with Christ's eyes, we shall not be depressed by the apparent unbroken surface of heathenism but see, as He did, everywhere souls that belong to Him, who may and must be won; we shall joyfully embrace the work which He has given us to do; we shall arm ourselves against the discouragements of the present, by living much in the past at the foot of the Cross, till we catch the true image of the Saviour's love, and much in the future in the midst of the ransomed flock, till we too behold the roses blossoming in the wilderness, the bright waters covering all the dry places in the desert, and the families of men sitting, clothed and in their right mind, at the feet of Jesus.

Our missionary work is the pure and inevitable result of a belief in these words of my text. Can a man believe that Christ has other sheep for whom He died because He must bring them in, whom He will bring in because

He died, and *not* work according to his power in the line of the divine purposes? The missionary spirit is but the Christian spirit working in one particular direction. Missionary societies are but one of the authentic outcomes of Christian principles, as natural as holiness of life, or the act of prayer.

To secure, then, a more vigorous energy in such work, we need chiefly what we need for all Christian growth—namely, more and deeper communion with Christ, a more vivid realisation of His grace and love for ourselves. And then we need that, under the double stimulus of His love and of His commandment—which at bottom are one—our minds should be more frequently occupied with this subject of Christian missions. Most of us know too little about the matter to feel very much. And then we need that we should more seriously reflect upon the facts in relation to our own personal responsibility and duty. You complain of the triteness of such appeals as this sermon. Brethren, have you ever tried that recipe for freshening up well-worn truths, namely, thinking about them in connection with the simplest, most important of all questions—what, then, ought I to do in view of these truths? Am I exaggerating when I say, that not one-half of the professing Christians of our day give an hour in the year to pondering that question, with reference to missionary work? Oh! dear friends, see to it that you live in Christ for yourselves, and then see to it that you think His thoughts about the heathen world, till your pity is stirred and your mind braced to the firm resolve that you too will work the works of Christ and bring in the wanderers.

We have had as large results as Christ has led us to expect, and far larger than we deserved. Christian

missions are yet in their infancy—alas! that it should be so. But in these seventy years since they may be said to have begun, what wonderful successes have been achieved. We are often told that we have done nothing. Is it so? The plant has been got together, methods of working have been systematised, mistakes in some measure corrected. We have spent much of our time in learning how to work, and that process is by no means over yet. But with all these deductions, which ought fairly to be made, how much has been accomplished? The Bible has been put into the languages of seven hundred millions of men. The beginnings of a Christian literature have been supplied for five-sixths of the world. Half a million of professed converts have been gathered in, or as many as there were at the end of the first century, after about the same number of years of labour, and with apostles for missionaries and miracles for proof. And if these still bear on their ankles the marks of the fetters, and limp as they walk, or cannot see very clearly at first, it is no more than might be expected from their long darkness in the prison-house, and it is no more than Paul had to contend with at Ephesus and Corinth.

Every church that has engaged in the toil has shared in the blessing, and has its own instances of special prosperity. We have had Jamaica; the London Missionary Society, Madagascar, and the South Seas; the Wesleyans, Fiji; the Episcopal Societies, Tinnevely; the American brethren, Burmah, and the Karens. Some of the ruder mythologies have been so utterly extirpated that the children of idolaters have seen the gods whom their fathers worshipped for the first time in the British Museum. While over those more compact and scientific systems which lie like an

incubus on mighty peoples, there has crept a sickening consciousness of a coming doom, and they already half own their conqueror in the Stronger One than they.

‘They feel from Judah’s land
The dreaded Infant’s hand.’

‘Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, the idols are upon the beasts.’ Surely God has granted us success enough for our thankful confidence, more than enough for our deserts. I repeat it, it is as much as He promised, as much as we had any right to expect, and it is a vast deal more than any other system of belief or of no belief, any of your spiritualised Christianities, or still more intangible creeds has ever managed, or ever thought of trying. To those who taunt us with no success, and who perhaps would not dislike Christian missions so much if they disliked Christian truth a little less, we may very fairly and calmly answer—This rod has budded at all events; do you the same with your enchantments.

But the past is no measure of the future. From the very nature of the undertaking the ratio of progress increases at a rapid rate. The first ten years of labour in India showed twenty-seven converts, the seventh ten showed more than twenty-seven thousand. The preparation may be as slow as the solemn gathering of the thunder-clouds, as they noiselessly steal into their places, and slowly upheave their grey billowing crests; the final success may be as swift as the lightning which flashes in an instant from one side of the heavens to the other. It takes long years to hew the tunnel, to ‘make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain,’ and then smooth and fleet the great power rushes along the rails. To us the cry comes, ‘Prepare ye in the desert an highway for our God.’ The toil is sore and

long, but 'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.' The Alpine summits lie white and ghastly in the spring sunshine, and it seems to pour ineffectual beams on their piled cold; but by slow degrees it is silently loosening the bands of the snow, and after a while a goat's step, as it passes along a rocky ledge, or a breath of wind will move a tiny particle, and in an instant its motion spreads over a mile of mountain side, and the avalanche is rushing swifter and mightier at every foot down to the valley below, where it will all turn into sweet water, and ripple glancing in the sunshine. Such is our work. It may seem very hopeless, and be mostly unobservable in surface results, but it is very real for all that. The conquering impulse, for which our task may have been to prepare the way, will be given, and then we shall wonder to see how surely the kingdom was coming, even when we observed it not.

Ye have need of patience, and to feed your patience, ye have need of fellowship with Christ, of faith in His promises, of sympathy with His mind. God has given us, dear brethren, special reason for renewed consecration to this service in the blessings which have during the year terminated our anxieties and crowned our work for our own Society. But let us not dwell upon what has been done. These successes are brooks by the way at which we may drink—nothing more. We ought to be like shepherds in the lonely mountain glens, who see in the fast-falling snow and the bitter blast a summons to the hillside, and there all the night long wherever the drift lies deepest and the wind bites the most sharply, search the most eagerly for the poor half-dead creatures, and as they find each, bear it back to the safe shelter, nor stay

behind to count the rescued, nor to rest their weariness, for all the bright light in the cottage and the blackness without, but forth again on the same quest, till all the Master's sheep have been rescued from the white death that lay treacherous around, and are sleeping at peace in His folds. A mighty Voice ought ever to be sounding in our ears, 'Other sheep I have,' and the answer of our hearts and of our lives should be, 'Them also, O Lord! will I try to bring.' Not till the far-off issue is accomplished shall we have a right to rest, and then we, with all those He has helped us to gather to His side, shall be among that flock, whom He who is at once Lamb and Shepherd, our Brother and our Lord, our Sacrifice and King, 'shall feed and lead by living fountains of waters,' in the sweet pastures of the upper world, where there are no ravening wolves, nor false guides to terrify and bewilder His flock any more at all for ever.

THE DELAYS OF LOVE

'Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was.'—JOHN xi. 5, 6.

WE learn from a later verse of this chapter that Lazarus had been dead four days when Christ reached Bethany. The distance from that village to the probable place of Christ's abode, when He received the message, was about a day's journey. If, therefore, to the two days on which He abode still after the receipt of the news, we add the day which the messengers took to reach Him and the day which He occupied in travelling, we get the four days since which Lazarus had been laid in his grave. Consequently the probability is that, when our Lord had

the message, the man was dead. Christ did not remain still, therefore, in order to work a greater miracle by raising Lazarus from the dead than He would have done by healing, but He stayed—strange as it would appear—for reasons closely connected with the highest well-being of all the beloved three, and *because* He loved them.

John is always very particular in his use of that word 'therefore,' and he points out many a subtle and beautiful connection of cause and effect by his employment of it. I do not know that any of them are more significant and more full of illumination with regard to the ways of divine providence than the instance before us. How these two sisters must have looked down the rocky road that led up from Jericho during those four weary days, to see if there were any signs of His coming. How strange it must have appeared to the disciples themselves that He made no sign of movement, notwithstanding the message. Perhaps John's scrupulous carefulness in pointing out that His love was Christ's reason for His quiescence may reflect a remembrance of the doubts that had crept over the minds of himself and his brethren during these two days of strange inaction. The Evangelist will have us learn a lesson, which reaches far beyond the instance in hand, and casts light on many dark places.

I. Christ's delays are the delays of love.

We have all of us, I suppose, had experience of desires for the removal of bitterness or sorrows, or for the fulfilment of expectations and wishes, which we believed, on the best evidence that we could find, to be in accordance with His will, and which we have been able to make prayers out of, in true faith and

submission, which prayers have had to be offered over and over and over again, and no answer has come. It is part of the method of Providence that the lifting away of the burden and the coming of the desires should be a hope deferred. And instead of stumbling at the mystery, or feeling as if it made a great demand upon our faith, would it not be wiser for us to lay hold of that little word of the Apostle's here, and to see in it a small window that opens out on to a boundless prospect, and a glimpse into the very heart of the divine motives in His dealings with us?

If we could once get that conviction into our hearts, how quietly we should go about our work! What a beautiful and brave patience there would be in us, if we habitually felt that the only reason which actuates God's providence in its choice of times of fulfilling our desires and lifting away our bitterness is our own good! Nothing but the purest and simplest love, transparent and without a fold in it, sways Him in all that He does. Why should it be so difficult for us to believe this? If we were more in the way of looking at life, with all its often unwelcome duty, and its arrows of pain and sorrow, and all the disappointments and other ills that it is heir to, as a discipline, and were to think less about the unpleasantness, and more about the purpose, of what befalls us, we should find far less difficulty in understanding that His delay is born of love, and is a token of His tender care.

Sorrow is prolonged for the same reason as it was sent. It is of little use to send it for a little while. In the majority of cases, time is an element in its working its right effect upon us. If the weight is lifted, the elastic substance beneath springs up again. As soon as the wind passes over the cornfield, the

bowing ears raise themselves. You have to steep foul things in water for a good while before the pure liquid washes out the stains. And so time is an element in all the good that we get out of the discipline of life. Therefore, the same love which sends must necessarily protract, beyond our desires, the discipline under which we are put. If we thought of it, as I have said, more frequently as discipline and schooling, and less frequently as pain and a burden, we should understand the meaning of things a great deal better than we do, and should be able to face them with braver hearts, and with a patient, almost joyous, endurance.

If we think of some of the purposes of our sorrows and burdens, we shall discern still more clearly that time is needed for accomplishing them, and that, therefore, love must delay its coming to take them away. For example, the object of them all, and the highest blessing that any of us can obtain, is that our wills should be bent until they coincide with God's, and that takes time. The shipwright, when he gets a bit of timber that he wants to make a 'knee' out of, knows that to mould it into the right form is not the work of a day. A will may be *broken* at a blow, but it will take a while to *bend* it. And just because swiftly passing disasters have little permanent effect in moulding our wills, it is a blessing, and not an evil, to have some standing fact in our lives, which will make a continual demand upon us for continually repeated acts of bowing ourselves beneath His sweet, though it may seem severe, will. God's love in Jesus Christ can give us nothing better than the opportunity of bowing our wills to His, and saying, 'Not mine, but Thine be done.' If that is why He stops on the other side of Jordan, and does not come ever to the loving

messages of beloved hearts, then He shows His love in the sweetest and the loftiest form. So, dear friends, if you carry a lifelong sorrow, do not think that it is a mystery why it should lie upon your shoulders when there are omnipotence and an infinite heart in the heavens. If it has the effect of bending you to His purpose, it is the truest token of His loving care that He can send. In like manner, is it not worth carrying a weight of unfulfilled wishes, and a weariness of unalleviated sorrows, if these do teach us three things, which are one thing—faith, endurance, prayerfulness, and so knit us by a threefold cord that cannot be broken, to the very heart of God Himself?

II. This delayed help always comes at the right time.

Do not let us forget that Heaven's clock is different from ours. In our day there are twelve hours, and in God's a thousand years. What seems long to us is to Him 'a little while.' Let us not imitate the short-sighted impatience of His disciples, who said, 'What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith.' The time of separation looked so long in anticipation to them, and to Him it had dwindled to a moment. For two days, eight-and-forty hours, He delayed His answer to Mary and Martha, and they thought it an eternity, while the heavy hours crept by, and they only said, 'It's very weary, He cometh not, they said.' How long did it look to them when they had got Lazarus back?

The longest protraction of the fulfilment of the most yearning expectation and fulfilled desire will seem but as the winking of an eyelid when we get to estimate duration by the same scale by which He estimates it, the scale of Eternity. The ephemeral insect, born in

the morning and dead when the day fades, has a still minuter scale than ours, but we should not think of regulating our estimate of long and short by it. Do not let us commit the equal absurdity of regulating the march of His providence by the swift beating of our timepieces. God works leisurely because God has eternity to work in.

The answer always comes at the right time, and is punctual though delayed. For instance, Peter is in prison. The Church keeps praying for him; prays on, day after day. No answer. The week of the feast comes. Prayer is made intensely and fervently and continuously. No answer. The slow hours pass away. The last day of his life, as it would appear, comes and goes. No answer. The night gathers; prayer rises to heaven. The last hour of the last watch of the last night that he had to live has come, and as the veil of darkness is thinning, and the day is beginning to break, 'the angel of the Lord shone round about him.' But there is no haste in his deliverance. All is done leisurely, as in the confidence of ample time to spare, and perfect security. He is bidden to arise quickly, but there is no hurry in the stages of his liberation. 'Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals.' He is to take time to lace them. There is no fear of the quaternion of soldiers waking, or of there not being time to do all. We can fancy the half-sleeping and wholly-bewildered Apostle fumbling at the sandal-strings, in dread of some movement rousing his guards, and the calm angel face looking on. The sandals fastened, he is bidden to put on his garments and follow. With equal leisure and orderliness he is conducted through the first and the second guard of sleeping soldiers, and then through the prison gate. He might have been lifted at once clear

out of his dungeon, and set down in the house where many were gathered praying for him. But more signal was the demonstration of power which a deliverance so gradual gave, when it led him slowly past all obstacles and paralysed their power. God is never in haste. He never comes too soon nor too late. 'The Lord shall help them, and that right early.' Sennacherib's army is round the city, famine is within the walls. To-morrow will be too late. But to-night the angel strikes, and the enemies are all dead men. So God's delay makes the deliverance the more signal and joyous when it is granted. And though hope deferred may sometimes make the heart sick, the desire, when it comes, is a tree of life.

III. The best help is not delayed.

The principle which we have been illustrating applies only to one half—and that the less important half—of our prayers and of Christ's answers. For in regard to spiritual blessings, and our petitions for fuller, purer, and diviner life, there is no delay. In that region the law is not 'He abode still two days in the same place,' but 'Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.' If you have been praying for deeper knowledge of God, for lives liker His, for hearts more filled with the Spirit, and have not had the answer, do not fall back upon the misapplication of such a principle as this of my text, which has nothing to do with that region; but remember that the only reason why good people do not immediately get the blessings of the Christian life for which they ask lies in themselves, and not at all in God. 'Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and have not, because'—not because He delays, but because—'ye ask amiss,' or because, having asked, you get up from your knees and go

away, not looking to see whether the blessing is coming down or not.

Ah! there is a sad amount of lying and hypocrisy in prayers for spiritual blessings. Many petitioners do not want to have them. They would not know what to do with them if they got them. They make the requests because their fathers did so before them, and because these are the right kind of things to say in a prayer. Such prayers get no answers. If a man prays for some spiritual enlargement, and then goes out into the world and lives clean contrary to his prayers, what right has he to say that God delays His answers? No, He does not delay His answers, but we push back His answers, and the gift that is given we will not take. Let us remember that the two halves of the divine dealings are not regulated by the same principle, though they be regulated by the same motive; and that the love which often delays for our good, in regard to the desires that have reference to outward things, is swift as the lightning to answer every petition which moves within the circle of our spiritual life.

'Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye stand praying, believe that' then and there 'ye receive them'; and the undelaying God will take care that 'you shall have them.'

CHRIST'S QUESTION TO EACH

For the Young

'... Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord.'—JOHN xi. 28, 27.

As each of these annual sermons which I have preached for so long comes round, I feel more solemnly the grow-

ing probability that it may be the last. Like a man nearing the end of his day's work, I want to make the most of the remaining moments. Whether this is the last sermon of the sort that I shall preach or not, it is certainly the last of the kind that some of you will hear from me, or possibly from any one.

So, dear friends, I have felt that neither you nor I can afford to waste this hour in considering subjects of secondary interest, appropriate as some of them might be. I wish to come to the main point at once, and to press upon you all, and especially on the younger portion of this audience, the question of your own personal religion.

The words of my text, as you will probably remember, were addressed by our Lord to Martha, as she was writhing in agony over her dead brother. Christ proclaims, with singular calmness and majesty, His character and work as the Resurrection and the Life, and then seeks to draw her from her absorbing sorrow to an effort of faith which shall grasp the truths He proclaims. He flashes out this sudden question, like the swift thrust of a gleaming dagger. It is a demand for credence to His assertion—on His bare word—tremendous as that assertion is. And nobly was the demand met by the as swift, unfaltering answer, 'Yea, Lord,' I believe in Thee, and so I believe in Thy word.

Now, friends, Jesus Christ is putting the same question to each of us. And I pray that our answers may be Martha's.

I. Note, first, the significance of the question.

'This.' What is *this*? The answer will tell us what are the central essential facts, faith in which makes a Christian. Of course the form in which our Lord's

previous utterance was cast was coloured by the circumstances under which He spoke, and was so shaped as to meet the momentary exigency. But whilst thus the form is determined by the fact that He was speaking to a heart wrung by separation, and as a preliminary to a mighty act of resurrection, the essential truths which are so expressed are those which, as I believe, constitute the fundamental truths of Christianity—the very core and heart of the Gospel.

Turn, then, but for a moment, to what immediately precedes my text. Our Lord says three things. First, He asserts His supernatural character and divine relation to life: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.' Next, He declares that it is possible for Him to communicate to dying and to dead men a life which triumphs over death, and laughs at change, and persists through the superficial experience which we christen by the name of Death, unaffected, undiminished, as some sweet spring might gush up in the heart of a salt solitary sea. And then He declares that the condition on which He, the Life-giver, gives of His immortal life to dying men, is their trust in Him. These three—His character and work, the gifts of which His hands are full, and the way by which the gifts may be appropriated by us men—these three are, as I take it, the central facts of Christianity. 'Believest thou this?'

The question comes to us all; and in these days of unsettlement it is well to have some clear understanding of what is the 'irreducible minimum' of Christian teaching. I take it that it lies here. There are two opposite errors which, like all opposite errors, are bolted together, and revolve round a common centre. The one of them is the extreme conservative tendency

which regards every pin and bolt of the tabernacle as if it were equally sacred with the altar and the ark. And the other is the tendency which christens itself 'liberal and progressive,' and which is always ready to exchange old lamps, though they have burnt brightly in the past, for new ones that are as yet only glittering metal and untried. In these days, when it is a presumption against any opinion, that our fathers believed it (an error into which young people are most prone to fall), and when, by the energy of contradiction, that error has evoked, and is evoking, the opposite exaggeration that adheres to all that is traditional, to all that has been regarded as belonging to the essentials of the Christian faith, and so is fearful, trembling for the Ark of God when there is no need, let us fall back upon these great words of the Master, and see that the things which constitute the living heart of His message and gift to the world are neither more nor less than these three: the supernatural Christ, the life which He imparts, and the condition on which He bestows it. 'Believest thou this?' If you do, you need take very little heed of the fluctuations of contemporary opinion as to other matters, valuable and important as these may be in their place; and may let men say what they will about disputed questions—about the method by which the vehicle of revelation has been created and preserved, about the regulation of the external forms of the Church, about a hundred other things that men often lose their tempers and spoil their Christianity by fighting for, and fall back upon the great central verity, a Christ from above, the Giver of Life to all that put their trust in Him.

Let me expand this question for you. 'We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'—'believest

thou this?' 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ'—'believest thou this?' 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish'—'believest thou this?' 'The Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many'—'believest thou this?' 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'—'believest thou this?' 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept'—'believest thou this?' 'I go to prepare a place for you'—'believest thou this?' 'Where I am there shall also My servant be'—'believest thou this?' 'So shall we ever be with the Lord'—'believest thou this?' That is Christianity; and not theories about inspiration, and priesthood, and sacramental efficacy, or any of the other thorny questions which have, in the course of ages, started up. Here is the living centre; hold fast, I beseech you, by it.

Then, again, the significance of this question is in the direction of making clear for us the way by which men lay hold of these great truths. The truths are of such a sort as that merely to say, 'Oh yes, I believe it; it is quite true!' is by no means sufficient. If a man tells me that two parallel lines produced ever so far will never meet, I say, 'Yes, I believe it'; and there is nothing more to be done or said. If a man says to me, 'Two and two make four,' I say, 'Yes'; and there my assent ends. If a man says, 'It is right to do right,' it is quite clear that the attitude of intellectual assent, which was quite enough for the other order of statements, is not enough for this one; and to merely say, 'Oh yes, it is right to do right,' is by no means the only attitude which we ought to take in regard to such a truth. And if God comes to me and says, 'Thou art a

sinful man, and Jesus Christ has died for thee; and if thou takest Him for thy Saviour thou shalt be saved in this life, and saved for ever,' it is just as clear that no mere acceptance of the saying as a verity exhausts my proper attitude in reference to it. Or to come to plainer words, no man will really, and out and out, and adequately, believe this gospel unless he does a great deal more than assent to it or refrain from contradicting it.

So I desire to urge this form of the question on you now. Dear brethren, do you *trust* in 'this,' which you say you believe? There is no greater enemy of the Christian faith than the ordinary lazy—what the philosophers call *otiose*, which is only a grand word for lazy—assent of the understanding, because men will not take the trouble to contradict it or think about it.

That is the sort of Christianity which is the Christianity of a good many church and chapel-goers. They do not care enough about the subject to contradict the ordinary run of belief. Of all impotent things there is nothing more impotent than a creed which lies idly in a man's head, and never has touched his heart or his will. Why, I should get on a great deal better if I were talking to people that had never heard anything about the gospel than I have any chance of getting on with you, who have been drenched with it all your days, till it goes over you and runs off like water off a duck's back. The shells that were hurled against the earthworks of Sebastopol broke away the front surface of the mounds, and then the rubbish protected the fortifications; and that is what happens with many of my hearers. You have heard the gospel so often that the *débris* of your old hearings is raised between you and me, and my words cannot get at you. 'Believest thou this?'—not in the fashion in which people

stand up in church or chapel and look about them and rattle off the Creed every Sunday of their lives, and attach not the ghost of an idea to a single clause of it; but in the sense that the conviction of these truths is so deep in your hearts that it moves your whole nature to cast yourselves on Jesus Christ as your Saviour and your all. That is the belief to which alone the life that is promised here will come. Oh! brethren, I have no business to ask you the question, and you have no need to answer it to me! Sometimes good, well-meaning people do a mint of harm by pushing such questions into the faces of people unprepared. But take the question into your own hearts, and remember what belief is, and what it is that you have to believe, and answer according to its true significance, and in the light of conscience, the solemn question that I press upon you.

II. Now, secondly, let me ask you to think of what depends upon the answer.

In the case before us—if I may look back to it for an instant—there is a very illuminative instance of what did depend upon it. Martha had to believe that Christ was the Resurrection and the Life as a condition precedent to her seeing that He was so. For, as He said Himself before He spoke the mighty word which raised Lazarus, ‘Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?’ and so her faith was the condition of her being able to verify the facts which her faith grasped. Well, let me put that into plainer words. It is just this—a man gets from Christ what he trusts Christ to give him, and there is no other way of proving the truth of His promises than by accepting His promises, and then they fulfil themselves. You cannot know that a medicine will cure you till you swallow it. You must first ‘taste’

before you 'see that God is good.' Faith verifies itself by the experience it brings.

And what does it bring? I said, all for which a man trusts Christ. All is summed up in that one favourite word of our Lord as revealed in this fourth Gospel, which includes in itself everything of blessedness and of righteousness—life, life eternal. Dear brethren, you and I, apart from Jesus Christ, are dead in trespasses and sins. The life that we live in the flesh is an apparent life, which covers over the true death of separation from God. And you young people, fix this in your minds at the beginning, it will save you many a heartache, and many an error—there is nothing worth calling life, except that which comes to a quiet heart submissive and enfranchised through faith in Jesus Christ. And if you will trust yourselves to Him, and answer this question with your ringing 'Yea, Lord!' then you will get a life which will quicken you out of your deadness; a life which will mould you day by day into more entire beauty of character and conformity with Himself; a life which will shed sweetness and charm over dusty commonplaces, and make sudden verdure spring in dreary, herbless deserts; a life which will bring a solemn joy into sorrow, a strength for every duty; which will bring manna in the wilderness, honey from the rock, light in darkness, and a present God for your sufficient portion; a life which will run on into the dim glories of eternity, and know no change but advancement, through the millenniums of ages.

But, dear brethren, whilst thus, on condition of their faith, the door into all divine and endless blessedness and progress is flung wide open for men, do not forget the other side of the issues which depend on

this question. For if it is true that Jesus Christ is Life, and the Source of it, and that faith in Him is the way by which you and I get it, then there is no escape from the solemn conclusion that to be out of Christ, and not to be exercising faith in Him, is to be infected with death, and to be shut up in a charnel-house. I dare not suppress the plain teaching of Jesus Christ Himself: 'He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life.' The issues that depend upon the answer to this question of my text may be summed up, if I may venture to say so, by taking the words of our Lord Himself and converting them into their opposite. He said, 'He that believeth . . . though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.' That implies, He that believeth *not* in Christ, though he were living, yet shall he die, and whosoever liveth and believeth *not* shall never live. *These are the issues—the alternative issues—that depend on your answer to this question.*

III. And now, lastly, let me ask you to think of the direct personal appeal to every soul that lies in this question.

I have dwelt upon two out of the three words of which the question is composed—'*believest thou this?*' Let me dwell for a moment on the third of them—'*believest thou?*'

Now that suggests the thought on which I do not need to dwell, but which I seek briefly to lay upon your hearts and consciences—viz., the intensely personal act of your own faith, by which alone Jesus Christ can be of any use to you. Do not be led away by any vague notions which people have about the benefits of a Church or its ordinances. Do not suppose that any

sacraments or any priest can do for you what you have to do in the awful solitude of your own determining will—put out your hand and grasp Jesus Christ. Can any person or thing be the condition or channel of spiritual blessing to you, except in so far as your own individual act of trust comes into play? You must take the bread with your own hands, you must masticate it with your own teeth, you must digest it with your own organs, before it can minister nourishment to your blood and force to your life. And there is only one way by which any man can come into any vital and life-giving connection with Jesus Christ, and that is, by the exercise of his own personal faith.

And remember, too, that as the exercise of uniting trust in Jesus Christ is exclusively your own affair, so exclusively your own affair is the responsibility of answering this question. To you alone is it addressed. You, and only you, have to answer it.

There was once a poor woman who went after Jesus Christ, and put out a pale, wasted, tremulous finger to touch the hem of His garment. His fine sensitiveness detected the light pressure of that petitioning finger, and allowed virtue to go out, though the crowd surged about Him and thronged Him. No crowds come between you and Jesus Christ. You and He, the two of you, have, so to speak, the world to yourselves, and straight to *you* comes this question, ‘Believest thou?’

Ah! brethren, that habit of skulking into the middle of the multitude, and letting the most earnest appeal from the pulpit go diffused over the audience is the reason why you sit there quiet, complacent, perhaps wholly unaffected by what I am trying to make a pointed, individual address. Suppose all the other

people in this place of worship were away but you and I, would not the word that I am trying to speak come with more force to your hearts than it does now? Well, think away the world and all its millions, and realise the fact that you stand in Christ's presence, with all His regard concentrated upon you, and that to thee individually this question comes from a gracious, loving heart, which longs that you answer, 'Yea, Lord, I believe!'

Why should you not? Suppose you said to Him, 'No, Lord, I do not'; and suppose He said, 'Why do you not?' what do you think you would say then? You will have to answer it one day, in very solemn circumstances, when all the crowds will fall away, as they do from a soldier called out of the ranks to go up and answer for mutiny to his commanding officer. 'Every one of us shall give an account of himself,' and the lips that said so lovingly at the grave of Lazarus, 'Believest thou this?' and are saying it again, dear friend, to you, even through my poor words, will ask it once more. For this is the question the answer to which settles whether we shall stand at His right hand or at His left. Say now, with humble faith, 'Yea, Lord!' and you will have the blessing of them who have not seen, and yet have believed.

THE OPEN GRAVE AT BETHANY

'Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! And some of them said, Could not this Man, which opened the

eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.—JOHN xi. 30-45.

WHY did Jesus stay outside Bethany and summon Martha and Mary to come to Him? Apparently that He might keep Himself apart from the noisy crowd of conventional mourners whose presence affronted the majesty and sanctity of sorrow, and that He might speak to the hearts of the two real mourners. A divine decorum forbade Him to go to the house. The Life-bringer keeps apart. His comforts are spoken in solitude. He revered grief. How beautifully His sympathetic delicacy contrasts with the heartless rush of those who 'were comforting' Mary when they thought that she was driven to go suddenly to the grave by a fresh burst of sorrow! If they had had any real sympathy or perception, they would have stayed where they were, and let the poor burdened heart find ease in lonely weeping. But, like all vulgar souls, they had one idea—never to leave mourners alone or let them weep.

Three stages seem discernible in the self-revelation of Jesus in this crowning miracle: His agitation and tears, His majestic confidence in His life-giving power now to be manifested, and His actual exercise of that power.

I. The repetition by Mary of Martha's words, as her first salutation, tells a pathetic story of the one thought

that had filled both sisters' hearts in these four dreary days. Why had He not come? How easily He could have come! How surely He could have prevented all this misery! Confidence in His power blends strangely with doubt as to His care. A hint of reproach is in the words, but more than a hint of faith in His might. He does not rebuke the rash judgment implied, for He knew the true love underlying it; but He does not directly answer Mary, as He had done Martha, for the two sisters needed different treatment.

We note that Mary has no such hope as Martha had expressed. Her more passive, meditative disposition had bowed itself, and let the grief overwhelm her. So in her we see a specimen of the excess of sorrow which indulges in the monotonous repetition of what would have happened if something else that did not happen had happened, and which is too deeply dark to let a gleam of hope shine in. Words will do little to comfort such grief. Silent sharing of its weeping and helpful deeds will do most.

So a great wave of emotion swept across the usually calm soul of Jesus, which John bids us trace to its cause by 'therefore' (ver. 33). The sight of Mary's real, and the mourners' half-real, tears, and the sound of their loud 'keening,' shook His spirit, and He yielded to, and even encouraged, the rush of feeling ('troubled Himself'). But not only sympathy and sorrow ruffled the clear mirror of His spirit; another disturbing element was present. He 'was moved with indignation' (Rev. Ver. marg.). Anger at Providence often mingles with our grief, but that was not Christ's indignation. The only worthy explanation of that strange ingredient in Christ's agitation is that it was directed against the source of death,—namely, sin. He

saw the cause manifested in the effects. He wept for the one, He was wroth at the other. The tears witnessed to the perfect love of the man, and of the God revealed in the man; the indignation witnessed to the recoil and aversion from sin of the perfectly righteous Man, and of the holy God manifested in Him. We get one glimpse into His heart, as on to some ocean heaving and mist-covered. The momentary sight proclaims the union in Him, as the Incarnate Word, of pity for our woes and of aversion from our sins.

His question as to the place of the tomb is not what we should have expected; but its very abruptness indicates effort to suppress emotion, and resolve to lose no time in redressing the grief. Most sweetly human are the tears that start afresh after the moment's repression, as the little company begin to move towards the grave. And most sadly human are the unsympathetic criticisms of His sacred sorrow. Even the best affected of the bystanders are cool enough to note them as tokens of His love, at which perhaps there is a trace of wonder; while others snarl out a sarcasm which is double-barrelled, as casting doubt on the reality either of the love or of the power. 'It is easy to weep, but if He had cared for him, and could work miracles, He might surely have kept him alive.' How blind men are! 'Jesus wept,' and all that the lookers-on felt was astonishment that He should have cared so much for a dead man of no importance, or carping doubt as to the genuineness of His grief and the reality of His power. He shows us His pity and sorrow still—to no more effect with many.

II. The passage to the tomb was marked by his continued agitation. But his arrival there brought calm and majesty. Now the time has come which He

had in view when He left his refuge beyond Jordan; and, as is often the case with ourselves, suddenly tremor and tumult leave the spirit when face to face with a moment of crisis. There is nothing more remarkable in this narrative than the contrast between Jesus weeping and indignant, and Jesus serene and authoritative as He stands fronting the cave-sepulchre. The sudden transformation must have awed the gazers.

He points to the stone, which, probably like that of many a grave discovered in Palestine, rolled in a groove cut in the rocky floor in front of the tomb. The command accords with His continual habit of confining the miraculous within the narrowest limits. He will do nothing by miracle which can be done without it. Lazarus could have heard and emerged, though the stone had remained. If the story had been a myth, he very likely would have done so. Like 'loose him, and let him go,' this is a little touch that cannot have been invented, and helps to confirm the simple, historical character of the account.

Not less natural, though certainly as unlikely to have been told unless it had happened, is Martha's interruption. She must have heard what was going on, and, with her usual activity, have joined the procession, though we left her in the house. She thinks that Jesus is going into the grave; and a certain reverence for the poor remains, as well as for Him, makes her shrink from the thought of even His loving eyes seeing them now. Clearly she has forgotten the dim hopes which had begun in her when she talked with Jesus. Therefore He gently reminds her of these; for His words (ver. 40) can scarcely refer to anything but that interview, though the precise form of expression now used is not found in the report of it (vers. 25-27).

We mark Christ's calm confidence in His own power, His identification of its effect with the outflashing of the glory of God, and His encouragement to her to exercise faith by suspending her sight of that glory upon her faith. Does that mean that He would not raise her brother unless she believed? No; for He had determined to 'awake him out of sleep' before He left Peraea. But Martha's faith was the condition of her seeing the glory of God in the miracle. We may see a thousand emanations of that glory, and see none of it. We shall see it if we exercise faith. In the natural world, 'seeing is believing'; in the spiritual, believing is seeing.

Equally remarkable, as breathing serenest confidence, is the wonderful filial prayer. Our Lord speaks as if the miracle were already accomplished, so sure is He: 'Thou heardest Me.' Does this thanksgiving bring Him down to the level of other servants of God who have wrought miracles by divine power granted them? Certainly not; for it is in full accord with the teaching of all this Gospel, according to which 'the Son can do nothing of Himself,' but yet, whatsoever things the Father doeth, 'these also doeth the Son likewise.' Both sides of the truth must be kept in view. The Son is not independent of the Father, but the Son is so constantly and perfectly one with the Father that He is conscious of unbroken communion, of continual wielding of the whole divine power.

But the practical purpose of the thanksgiving is to be specially noted. It suspends His whole claims on the single issue about to be decided. It summons the people to mark the event. Never before had He thus heralded a miracle. Never had He deigned to say thus solemnly, 'If God does not work through Me now,

reject Me as an impostor; if He does, yield to Me as Messiah.' The moment stands alone in His life. What a scene! There is the open tomb, with its dead occupant; there are the eager, sceptical crowd, the sisters pausing in their weeping to gaze, with some strange hopes beginning to creep into their hearts, the silent disciples, and, in front of them all, Jesus, with the radiance of power in the eyes that had just been swimming in tears, and a new elevation in His tones. How all would be hushed in expectance of the next moment's act!

III. The miracle itself is told in the fewest words. What more was there to tell? The two ends, as it were, of a buried chain, appear above ground. Cause and effect were brought together. Rather, here was no chain of many links, as in physical phenomena, but here was the life-giving word, and there was the dead man living again. The 'loud voice' was as needless as the rolling away of the stone. It was but the sign of Christ's will acting. And the acting of His will, without any other cause, produces physical effects.

Lazarus was far away from that rock cave. But, wherever he was, he could hear, and he must obey. So, with graveclothes entangling his feet, and a napkin about his livid face, he came stumbling out into the light that dazed his eyes, closed for four dark days, and stood silent and motionless in that awestruck crowd. One Person there was not awestruck. Christ's calm voice, that had just reverberated through the regions of the dead, spoke the simple command, 'Loose him, and let him go.' To Him it was no wonder that He should give back a life. For the Christ who wept is the Christ whose voice all that are in the graves shall hear, and shall come forth.

THE SEVENTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL— THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

'And when Jesus thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, Come forth. 44. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin.'—JOHN xl. 43, 44.

THE series of our Lord's miracles before the Passion, as recorded in this Gospel, is fitly closed with the raising of Lazarus. It crowns the whole, whether we regard the greatness of the fact, the manner of our Lord's working, the minuteness and richness of the accompanying details, the revelation of our Lord's heart, the consolations which it suggests to sorrowing spirits, or the immortal hopes which it kindles.

And besides all this, the miracle is of importance for the development of the Evangelist's purpose, in that it makes the immediate occasion of the embittered hostility which finally precipitates the catastrophe of the Cross. Therefore the great length to which the narrative extends.

Of course it is impossible for us to attempt, even in the most cursory manner, to go over the whole. We must content ourselves with dealing with one or two of the salient points. And there are three things in this narrative which I think well worthy of our notice. There is the revelation of Christ as our Brother, by emotion and sorrow. There is the revelation of Christ as our Lord by His consciousness of divine power. There is the revelation of Christ as our Life by His mighty life-giving word. And to these three points I ask you to turn briefly.

I. First, then, we have here a revelation of Christ as our Brother, by emotion and sorrow.

This miracle stands alone in the whole majestic series of His mighty works by the fact that it is preceded by a storm of emotion, which shakes the frame of the

Master, which He is represented by the Evangelist not so much as suppressing as fostering, and which diverges and parts itself into the two feelings expressed by His groans and by His tears. The word which is rendered in our version 'He groaned in the spirit,' and which is twice repeated in the narrative, is, according to the investigations of the most careful philological commentators, expressive not only of the outward sign of an emotion, but of the nature of it. And the nature of the emotion is not merely the grief and the sympathy which distilled in tears, but it is something deeper and other than that. The word contains in it at least a tinge of the passion of 'indignation' (as it is expressed in the margin of the Revised Version). What caused the indignation? Cannot we fancy how there rose up, as in pale, spectral procession before His vision, the whole long series of human sorrows and losses, of which one was visible there before Him? He saw, in the one individual case, the whole *genus*. He saw the whole mass represented there, the ocean in the drop, and He looked beyond the fact and linked it with its cause. And as there rose before Him the reality of man's desolation through sin, and the thought that all this misery, loss, pain, parting, death, was a contradiction of the divine purpose, and an interruption of God's order, and that it had all been pulled down upon men's desperate heads by their own evil and their own folly, there rose in His heart the anger which is part of the perfectness of humanity when it looks upon sorrow linked by adamant chains with sin.

But the lightning of the wrath dissolved soon into the rain of pity and of sorrow, and, as we read, 'Jesus wept.' Looking upon the weeping Mary and the lamenting crowd, and Himself feeling the pain of the

parting from the friend whom He loved, the tears, which are the confession of human nature that it is passing through an emotion too deep for words, came to His all-seeing eyes.

Oh! brethren, surely—surely in this manifestation, or call it better, this revelation of Christ the Lord, expressed in these two emotions—surely there are large and blessed lessons for us! On them I can only touch in the lightest manner. Here, for one thing, is the blessed sign and proof of His true brotherhood with us. This Evangelist, to whom it was given to tell the Church and the world more than any of the others had imparted to them of the divine uniqueness of the Master's person, had also given to him in charge the corresponding and complementary message—to insist upon the reality and the verity of His manhood. His proclamation was 'the Word was made flesh,' and he had to dwell on both parts of that message, showing Him as the Word and showing Him as flesh. So he insists upon all the points which emerge in the course of his narrative that show the reality of Christ's corporeal manhood.

He joins with the others, who had no such lofty proclamation entrusted to them, in telling us how He was 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,' in that He hungered and thirsted and slept, and was wearied; how He was man, reasonable soul and human spirit, in that He grieved and rejoiced, and wondered and desired, and mourned and wept. And so we can look upon Him, and feel that this in very deed is One of ourselves, with a spirit participant of all human experiences, and a heart tremulously vibrating with every emotion that belongs to man.

Here we are also taught the sanction and the limits

of sorrow. Christianity has nothing to do with the false Stoicism and the false religion which is partly pride and partly insincerity, that proclaims it wrong to weep when God smites. But just as clearly and distinctly as the story before us says to us, 'Weep for yourselves and for the loved ones that are gone,' so distinctly does it draw the limits within which sorrow is sacred and hallowing, and beyond which it is harmful and weakening. Set side by side the grief of these two poor weeping sisters, and the grief of the weeping Christ, and we get a large lesson. They could only repine that something else had not happened differently which would have made all different. 'If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' One of the two sits with folded arms in the house, letting her sorrow flow over her pained head. Martha is unable, by reason of her grief, to grasp the consolation that is held out to her; her sorrow has made the hopes of the future seem to her very dim and of small account, and she puts away 'Thy brother shall rise again' with almost an impatient sweep of her hand. 'I know that he will rise in the resurrection at the last day. But oh! that is so far away, and what I want is present comfort.' Thus oblivious of duty, murmuring with regard to the accidents which might have been different, and unfitted to grasp the hopes that fill the future, these two have been hurt by their grief, and have let it overflow its banks and lay waste the land. But this Christ in His sorrow checks His sorrow that He may do His work; in His sorrow is confident that the Father hears; in His sorrow thinks of the bystanders, and would bring comfort and cheer to them. A sorrow which makes us more conscious of communion with the Father who is always listening, which makes us more conscious of

power to do that which He has put it into our hand to do, which makes us more tender in our sympathies with all that mourn, and swifter and readier for our work—such a sorrow is doing what God meant for us; and is a blessing in so thin a disguise that we can scarcely call it veiled at all.

And then, still further, there are here other lessons on which I cannot touch. Such, for instance, is the revelation in this emotion of the Master's, of a personal love that takes individuals to His heart, and feels all the sweetness and the power of friendship. That personal love is open to every one of us, and into the grace and the tenderness of it we may all penetrate. 'The disciple whom Jesus loved' is the Evangelist who, without jealousy, is glad to tell us that the same loving Lord took into the same sanctuary of His pure heart, Mary and Martha, and her brother. That which was given to them was not taken from him, and they each possessed the whole of the Master's love. So for every one of us that heart is wide open, and you and I, brethren, may contract such personal relations to the Master that we shall live with Christ as a man with his friend, and may feel that His heart is all ours.

So much for the lessons of the emotions whereby Christ is manifested to us as our Brother.

II. And now turn, in the next place, and that very briefly, to what lies side by side with this in the story, and at first sight may seem strangely contradictory of it, but in fact only completes the idea, viz. the majestic, calm consciousness of divine power by which He is revealed as our Lord.

At one step from the agitation and the storm of feeling there comes, 'Take ye away the stone.' And in

answer to the lamentations of the sister are spoken the great and wonderful words, 'Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?' And He looks back there to the message that had been sent to the sisters in response to their unspoken hope that He would come, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.' And He shows us that from the first moment, with the spontaneousness which, as I have already remarked in previous sermons on these 'signs,' characterises all the miracles of John's Gospel, 'He Himself knew what He would do,' and in the consciousness of His divine power had resolved that the dead Lazarus should be the occasion for the manifestation, the flashing out to the world, of the glory of God in the life-giving Son.

And then, in the same tone of majestic consciousness, there follows that thanksgiving *prior* to the miracle as for the accomplished miracle. 'I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' The best commentary upon these words, the deepest and the fullest exposition of the large truths that lie in them concerning the co-operation of the Father and the Son, is to be found in the passage from the fifth chapter of this Gospel, wherein there is set forth, drawn with the firmest hand, the clearest lines of truth upon this great and profound subject. 'The Son does nothing of Himself,' but 'whatsoever the Father doeth, that doeth the Son likewise.' A consciousness of continual co-operation with the Almighty Father, a consciousness that His will continually coincides with the Father's will, that unto Him there comes the power ever to do all

that Omnipotence can do, and that though we may speak of a gift given and a power derived, the relation between the giving Father and the recipient Son is altogether different from, and other than the relation between, the man that asks and the God that bestows. Poor Martha said, 'I know that even now, whatsoever Thou askest of God He will give Thee.' She thought of Him as a good Man whose prayers had power with Heaven. But up into an altogether other region soars the consciousness expressed in these words as of a divine Son whose work is wholly parallel with the Father's work, and of whom the two things that sound contradictory can both be said. His omnipotence is His own; His omnipotence is the Father's: 'As the Father hath life,' and therefore power in Himself, 'so hath He *given*'—there is the one half of the paradox—'so hath He given to the Son to have life *in Himself*'; there is the other. And unless you put them both together you do not think of Christ as Christ has taught us to think.

III. Lastly, we have here the revelation of Christ as our Life in His mighty, life-giving word.

The miracle, as I have said, stands high in the scale, not only by reason of what to us seems the greatness of the fact, though of course, properly speaking, in miracles there is no distinction as to the greatness of the fact, but also by reason of the manner of the working. The voice thrown into the cave reaches the ears of the sheeted dead: 'Lazarus, come forth!' And then, in words which convey the profound impression of awfulness and solemnity which had been made upon the Evangelist, we have the picture of the man with the graveclothes wrapped about his limbs, stumbling forth; and loving hands are bidden to take away

the napkin which covered his face. Perhaps the hand trembled as it was put forth, not knowing what awful sight the veil might cover.

With tenderest reticence, no word is spoken as to what followed. No hint escapes of the joy, no gleam of the experiences which the traveller brought back with him from that 'bourne' whence he had come. Surely some draught of Lethe must have been given him, that his spirit might be lulled into a wholesome forgetfulness, else life must have been a torment to him.

But be that as it may, what we have to notice is the fact here, and what it teaches us as a fact. Is it not a revelation of Jesus Christ as the absolute Lord of Life and Death, giving the one, putting back the other? Death has caught hold of his prey. 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered? Yea, the prey shall be taken from the mighty.' His bare word is divinely operative. He says to that grisly shadow 'Come!' and he cometh; He says to him 'Go!' and he goeth. And as a shepherd will drive away the bear that has a lamb between his bloody fangs, and the brute retreats, snarling and growling, but dropping his prey, so at the Lord's voice Lazarus comes back to life, and disappointed Death skulks away to the darkness.

The miracle shows Him as Lord of Death and Giver of Life. And it teaches another lesson, namely, the continuous persistency of the bond between Christ and His friend, unbroken and untouched by the superficial accident of life or death. Wheresoever Lazarus was he heard the voice, and wheresoever Lazarus was he knew the voice, and wheresoever Lazarus was he obeyed the voice. And so we are taught that the

relationship between Christ our life, and all them that love and trust Him, is one on which the tooth of death that gnaws all other bonds in twain hath no power at all. Christ is the Life, and, therefore, Christ is the Resurrection, and the thing that we call death is but a film which spreads on the surface, but has no power to penetrate into the depths of the relationship between us and Him.

Such, in briefest words, are the lessons of the miracle as a fact, but before I close I must remind you that it is to be looked at not only as a fact, but as a prophecy and as a parable.

It is a prophecy in a modified sense, telling us at all events that He has the power to bid men back from the dust and darkness, and giving us the assurance which His own words convey to us yet more distinctly: 'The hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth.' My brother! there be two resurrections in that one promise: the resurrection of Christ's friends and the resurrection of Christ's foes. And though to both His voice will be the awakening, some shall rise to joy and immortality and 'some to shame and everlasting contempt.' You will hear the voice; settle it for yourselves whether when He calls and thou answerest thou wilt say, 'Lo! here am I,' joyful to look upon Him; or whether thou wilt rise reluctant, and 'call upon the rocks and the hills to cover thee, and to hide thee from the face of Him that sitteth upon the Throne.'

And this raising is a parable as well as a prophecy; for even as Christ was the life of this Lazarus, so, in a deeper and more real sense, and not in any shadowy, metaphorical, mystical sense, is Jesus Christ the life of every spirit that truly lives at all. We are 'dead in

trespasses and sins.' For separation from God is death in all regions, death for the body in its kind, death for the mind, for the soul, for the spirit in their kinds; and only they who receive Christ into their hearts do live. Every Christian man is a miracle. There has been a true coming into the human of the divine, a true supernatural work, the infusion into a dead soul of the God-life which is the Christ-life.

And you and I may have that life. What is the condition? 'They that hear shall live.' Do you hear? Do you welcome? Do you take that Christ into your hearts? Is He your Life, my brother?

It is possible to resist that voice, to stuff your ears so full of clay, and worldliness, and sin, and self-reliance as that it shall not echo in your hearts. 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they that hear shall live,' and obtain to-day 'a better resurrection' than the resurrection of the body. If you do not hear that voice, then you will 'remain in the congregation of the dead.'

CAIAPHAS

'And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.'—ST. JOHN xi. 49, 50.

THE resurrection of Lazarus had raised a wave of popular excitement. Any stir amongst the people was dangerous, especially at the Passover time, which was nigh at hand, when Jerusalem would be filled with crowds of men, ready to take fire from any spark that might fall amongst them. So a hasty meeting of the principal ecclesiastical council of the Jews was sum-

moned, in order to discuss the situation, and concert measures for repressing the nascent enthusiasm. One might have expected to find there some disposition to inquire honestly into the claims of a Teacher who had such a witness to His claims as a man alive that had been dead. But nothing of the sort appears in their ignoble calculations. Like all weak men, they feel that 'something must be done,' and are perfectly unable to say what. They admit Christ's miracles: 'This man doeth many miracles,' but they are not a bit the nearer to recognising His mission, being therein disobedient to their law and untrue to their office. They fear that any disturbance will bring Rome's heavy hand down on them, and lead to the loss of what national life they still possess. But even that fear is not patriotism nor religion. It is pure self-interest. 'They will take away *our* place'—the Temple, probably—'and our nation.' The holy things were, in their eyes, their special property. And so, at this supreme moment, big with the fate of themselves and of their nation, their whole anxiety is about personal interests. They hesitate, and are at a loss what to do.

But however they may hesitate, there is one man who knows his own mind—Caiaphas, the high priest. He has no doubt as to what is the right thing to do. He has the advantage of a perfectly clear and single purpose, and no sort of restraint of conscience or delicacy keeps him from speaking it out. He is impatient at their vacillation, and he brushes it all aside with the brusque and contemptuous speech: 'Ye know nothing at all!' 'The one point of view for us to take is that of our own interests. Let us have that clearly understood; when we once ask what is "expedient for

us," there will be no doubt about the answer. This man must die. Never mind about His miracles, or His teaching, or the beauty of His character. His life is a perpetual danger to our prerogatives. I vote for death!' And so he clashes his advice down into the middle of their waverings, like a piece of iron into yielding water; and the strong man, restrained by no conscience, and speaking out cynically the thought that is floating in all their minds, but which they dare not utter, is master of the situation, and the resolve is taken. 'From that day forth' they determined to put Him to death.

But John regards this selfish, cruel advice as a prophecy. Caiaphas spoke wiser things than he knew. The Divine Spirit breathed in strange fashion through even such lips as his, and moulded his savage utterance into such a form as that it became a fit expression for the very deepest thought about the nature and the power of Christ's death. He did indeed die for that people—thinks the Evangelist—even though they have rejected Him, and the dreaded Romans *have* come and taken away our place and nation—but His death had a wider purpose, and was not for that nation only, but that also 'He should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad.'

Let us, then, take these two aspects of the man and his counsel: the unscrupulous priest and his savage advice; the unconscious prophet and his great prediction.

I. First, then, let us take the former point of view, and think of this unscrupulous priest and his savage advice. 'It is expedient for us that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.'

Remember who he **was**, the high priest of the nation,

with Aaron's mitre on his brow, and centuries of illustrious traditions embodied in his person; set by his very office to tend the sacred flame of their Messianic hopes, and with pure hands and heart to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people; the head and crown of the national religion, in whose heart justice and mercy should have found a sanctuary if they had fled from all others; whose ears ought to have been opened to the faintest whisper of the voice of God; whose lips should ever have been ready to witness for the truth.

And see what he is! A crafty schemer, as blind as a mole to the beauty of Christ's character and the greatness of His words; utterly unspiritual; undisguisedly selfish; rude as a boor; cruel as a cut-throat; and having reached that supreme height of wickedness in which he can dress his ugliest thought in the plainest words, and send them into the world unabashed. What a lesson this speech of Caiaphas, and the character disclosed by it, read to all persons who have a professional connection with religion!

He can take one point of view only, in regard to the mightiest spiritual revelation that the world ever saw; and that is, its bearing upon his own miserable personal interests, and the interests of the order to which he belongs. And so, whatever may be the wisdom, or miracles, or goodness of Jesus, because He threatens the prerogatives of the priesthood, He must die and be got out of the way.

This is only an extreme case of a temper and a tendency which is perennial. Popes and inquisitors and priests of all Churches have done the same, in their degree, in all ages. They have always been tempted to look upon religion and religious truth and religious organisations as existing somehow for their personal

advantage. And so 'the Church is in danger!' generally means 'my position is threatened,' and heretics are got rid of, because their teaching is inconvenient for the prerogatives of a priesthood, and new truth is fought against, because officials do not see how it harmonises with their pre-eminence.

It is not popes and priests and inquisitors only that are examples of the tendency. The warning is needed by every man who stands in such a position as mine, whose business it is professionally to handle sacred things, and to administer Christian institutions and Christian ritual. All such men are tempted to look upon the truth as their stock-in-trade, and to fight against innovations, and to array themselves instinctively against progress, and frown down new aspects and new teachers of truth, simply because they threaten, or appear to threaten, the position and prerogatives of the teachers that be. Caiaphas's sin is possible, and Caiaphas's temptation is actual, for every man whose profession it is to handle the oracles of God.

But the lessons of this speech and character are for us all. Caiaphas's sentence is an undisguised, unblushing avowal of a purely selfish standpoint. It is not a common depth of degradation to stand up, and without a blush to say: 'I look at all claims of revelation, at all professedly spiritual truth, and at everything else, from one delightfully simple point of view—I ask myself, how does it bear upon what I think to be to my advantage?' What a deal of perplexity a man is saved if he takes up that position! Yes! and how he has damned himself in the very act of doing it! For, look what this absorbing and exclusive self-regard does in the illustration before us, and let us learn what it will do to ourselves.

This selfish consideration of our own interests will make us as blind as bats to the most radiant beauty of truth; aye, and to Christ Himself, if the recognition of Him and of His message seems to threaten any of these. They tell us that fishes which live in the water of caverns come to lose their eyesight; and men that are always living in the dark holes of their own selfishly absorbed natures, they, too, lose their spiritual sight; and the fairest, loftiest, truest, and most radiant visions (which are realities) pass before their eyes, and they see them not. When you put on regard for yourselves as they do blinkers upon horses, you have no longer the power of wide, comprehensive vision, but only see straight forward upon the narrow line which you fancy to be marked out by your own interests. If ever there comes into the selfish man's mind a truth, or an aspect of Christ's mission, which may seem to cut against some of his practices or interests, how blind he is to it! When Lord Nelson was at Copenhagen, and they hoisted the signal of recall, he put his telescope up to his blind eye and said, 'I do not see it!' And that is exactly what this self-absorbed regard to our own interests does with hundreds of men who do not in the least degree know it. It blinds them to the plain will of the Commander-in-chief flying there at the masthead. 'There are none so blind as those who will not see'; and there are none who so certainly will not see as those who have an uneasy suspicion that if they do see they will have to change their tack. So I say, look at the instance before us, and learn the lesson of the blindness to truth and beauty which are Christ Himself, which comes of a regard to one's own interests.

Then again, this same self-regard may bring a

man down to any kind and degree of wrongdoing. Caiaphas was brought down by it, being the supreme judge of his nation, to be an assassin and an accomplice of murderers. And it is only a question of accident and of circumstances how far that man will descend who once yields himself up to the guidance of such a disposition and tendency. We have all of us to fight against the developed selfishness which takes the form of this, that, and the other sin; and we have all of us, if we are wise, to fight against the undeveloped sin which lies in all selfishness. Remember that if you begin with laying down as the canon of your conduct, 'It is expedient for me,' you have got upon an inclined plane that tilts at a very sharp angle, and is very sufficiently greased, and ends away down yonder in the depths of darkness and of death, and it is only a question of time how far and how fast, how deep and irrevocable, will be your descent.

And lastly, this same way of looking at things which takes 'It is expedient' as the determining consideration, has in it an awful power of so twisting and searing a man's conscience as that he comes to look at evil and never to know that there is anything wrong in it. This cynical high priest in our text had no conception that he was doing anything but obeying the plainest dictates of the most natural self-preservation when he gave his opinion that they had better kill Christ than have any danger to their priesthood. The crime of the actual crucifixion was diminished because the doers were so unconscious that it was a crime; but the crime of the process by which they had come to be unconscious—Oh how that was increased and deepened! So, if we fix our eyes sharply and exclusively on what makes for our own advantage, and take that as the

point of view from which we determine our conduct, we may, and we shall, bring ourselves into such a condition as that our consciences will cease to be sensitive to right and wrong; and we shall do all manner of bad things, and never know it. We shall 'wipe our mouths and say: "I have done no harm."' So, I beseech you remember this, that to live for self is hell, and that the only antagonist of such selfishness, which leads to blindness, crime, and a seared conscience, is to yield ourselves to the love of God in Jesus Christ and to say: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'

II. And now turn briefly to the second aspect of this saying, into which the former, if I may so say, melts away. We have the unconscious prophet and his great prediction.

The Evangelist conceives that the man who filled the office of high priest, being the head of the theocratic community, was naturally the medium of a divine oracle. When he says, 'being the high priest *that year*, Caiaphas prophesied,' he does not imply that the high priestly office was annual, but simply desires to mark the fateful importance of that year for the history of the world and the priesthood. 'In that year' the great 'High Priest for ever' came and stood for a moment by the side of the earthly high priest—the Substance by the shadow—and by His offering of Himself as the one Sacrifice for sin for ever, deprived priesthood and sacrifice henceforward of all their validity. So that Caiaphas was in reality the last of the high priests, and those that succeeded him for something less than half a century were but like ghosts that walked after cock-crow. And what the Evangelist would mark is the importance of 'that

year,' as making Caiaphas ever memorable to us. Solemn and strange that the long line of Aaron's priesthood ended in such a man—the river in a putrid morass—and that of all the years in the history of the nation, 'in that year' should such a person fill such an office!

'Being high priest he prophesied.' And was there anything strange in a bad man's prophesying? Did not the Spirit of God breathe through Balaam of old? Is there anything incredible in a man's prophesying unconsciously? Did not Pilate do so, when he nailed over the Cross, 'This is the King of the Jews,' and wrote it in Hebrew, and in Greek, and in Latin, conceiving himself to be perpetrating a rude jest, while he was proclaiming an everlasting truth? When the Pharisees stood at the foot of the Cross and taunted Him, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save,' did they not, too, speak deeper things than they knew? And were not the lips of this unworthy, selfish, unspiritual, unscrupulous, cruel priest so used as that, all unconsciously, his words lent themselves to the proclamation of the glorious central truth of Christianity, that Christ died for the nation that slew Him and rejected Him, nor for them alone, but for all the world? Look, though but for a moment, at the thoughts that come from this new view of the words which we have been considering.

They suggest to us, first of all, the twofold aspect of Christ's death. From the human point of view it was a savage murder by forms of law for political ends: Caiaphas and the priests slaying Him to avoid a popular tumult that might threaten their prerogatives, Pilate consenting to His death to avoid the unpopularity that might follow a refusal. From the

divine point of view it is God's great sacrifice for the sin of the world. It is the most signal instance of that solemn law of Providence which runs all through the history of the world, whereby bad men's bad deeds, strained through the fine network, as it were, of the divine providence, lose their poison and become nutritious and fertilising. 'Thou makest the wrath of men to praise Thee; with the residue thereof Thou girdest Thyself.' The greatest crime ever done in the world is the greatest blessing ever given to the world. Man's sin works out the loftiest divine purpose, even as the coral insects blindly build up the reef that keeps back the waters, or as the sea in its wild, impotent rage, seeking to overwhelm the land, only throws upon the beach a barrier that confines its waves and curbs their fury.

Then, again, this second aspect of the counsel of Caiaphas suggests for us the twofold consequences of that death on the nation itself. This Gospel of John was probably written after the destruction of Jerusalem. By the time that our Evangelist penned these words, the Romans *had* come and taken away their place and their nation. The catastrophe that Caiaphas and his party had, by their short-sighted policy, tried to prevent, had been brought about by the very deed itself. For Christ's death was practically the reason for the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth. When 'the husbandmen said, Come! let us kill Him, and seize on the inheritance,' which is simply putting Caiaphas's counsel into other language, they thereby deprived themselves of the inheritance. And so Christ's death *was* the destruction and not the salvation of the nation.

And yet, it was true that He died for that people, for every man of them, for Caiaphas as truly as for John, for Judas as truly as for Peter, for all the Scribes and

the Pharisees that mocked round His Cross, as truly as for the women that stood silently weeping there. He died for them all, and John, looking back upon the destruction of his nation, can yet say, 'He died for that people.' Yes! and just because He did, and because they rejected Him, His death, which they would not let be their salvation, became their destruction and their ruin. Oh! brethren, it is always so! He is either 'a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death!' 'Behold! I lay in Zion for a foundation, a tried Stone.' Build upon it and you are safe. If you do not build upon it, that Stone becomes 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.' You must either build upon Christ or fall over Him; you must either build *upon* Christ, or be crushed to powder *under* Him. Make your choice! The twofold effect is wrought ever, but we can choose which of the two shall be wrought upon us.

Lastly, we have here the twofold sphere in which our Lord's mighty death works its effects.

I have already said that this Gospel was written after the fall of Jerusalem. The whole tone of it shows that the conception of the Church as quite separate from Judaism was firmly established. The narrower national system had been shivered, and from out of the dust and hidden ruin of its crushing fall had emerged the fairer real ~~Church~~ a Church as wide as the world. The Temple on Zion—which was but a small building after all—had been burned with fire. It was *their* place, as Caiaphas called it. But the clearing away of the narrower edifice had revealed the rising walls of the great temple, the Christian Church, whose roof overarches every land, and in whose courts all men may stand and praise the Lord. So John, in his home in Ephesus, surrounded by flourishing churches in which Jews formed a small and

ever-decreasing element, recognised how far the dove with the olive-branch in its mouth flew, and how certainly that nation was only a little fragment of the many for whom Christ died.

'The children of God that were scattered abroad' were all to be united round that Cross. Yes! the only thing that unites men together is their common relation to a Divine Redeemer. That bond is deeper than all national bonds, than all blood-bonds, than community of race, than family, than friendship, than social ties, than community of opinion, than community of purpose and action. It is destined to absorb them all. All these are transitory and they are imperfect; men wander isolated notwithstanding them all. But if we are knit to Christ, we are knit to all who are also knit to Him. One life animates all the limbs, and one life's blood circulates through all the veins. 'So also is Christ.' We are one in Him, in whom all the body fitly joined together maketh increase, and in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth. If we have yielded to the power of that Cross which draws us to itself, we shall have been more utterly alone, in our penitence and in our conscious surrender to Christ, than ever we were before. But He sets the solitary in families, and that solemn experience of being alone with our Judge and our Saviour will be followed by the blessed sense that we are no more solitary, but 'fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.'

That death brings men into the *family* of God. He will 'gather into one the scattered children of God.' They are called children by anticipation. For surely nothing can be clearer than that the doctrine of all John's writings is that men are not children of God by virtue of their humanity, except in the inferior sense of

being made by Him, and in His image as creatures with spirit and will, but *become* children of God through faith in the Son of God, which brings about that new birth, whereby we become partakers of the Divine nature. 'To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.'

So I beseech you, turn yourselves to that dear Christ who has died for us all, for us each, for me and for thee, and put your confidence in His great sacrifice. You will find that you pass from isolation into society, from death into life, from the death of selfishness into the life of God. Listen to Him, who says: 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one flock' because there is 'one Shepherd.'

LOVE'S PRODIGALITY CENSURED AND VINDICATED

'Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that He was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.'—JOHN xii. 1-11.

JESUS came from Jericho, where He had left Zacchæus rejoicing in the salvation that had come to his house, and whence Bartimæus, rejoicing in His new power of

vision, seems to have followed Him. A few hours brought Him to Bethany, and we know from other Evangelists what a tension of purpose marked Him, and awed the disciples, as He pressed on before them up the rocky way. His mind was full of the struggle and death which were so near. The modest village feast in the house of Simon the leper comes in strangely amid the gathering gloom; but, no doubt, Jesus accepted it, as He did everything, and entered into the spirit of the hour. He would not pain His hosts by self-absorbed aloofness at the table. The reason for the feast is obviously the raising of Lazarus, as is suggested by his being twice mentioned in verses 1 and 2.

Our Lord had withdrawn to Ephraim so immediately after the miracle that the opportunity of honouring Him had not occurred. It was a brave tribute to pay Him in the face of the Sanhedrim's commandment (ch. xi. 57). This incident sets in sharpest contrast the two figures of Mary, the type of love which delights to give its best, and Judas, the type of selfishness which is only eager to get; and it shows us Jesus casting His shield over the uncalculating giver, and putting meaning into her deed.

I. In Eastern fashion, the guests seem to have all been males, no doubt the magnates of the village, and Jesus with His disciples. The former would have become accustomed to seeing Lazarus, but Christ's immediate followers would gaze curiously on him. And how he would gaze on Jesus, whom he had probably not seen since the napkin had been taken from his face. The two sisters were true to their respective characters. The bustling, practical Martha had perhaps not very fine or quickly moved emotions. She could not say graceful things to their benefactor, and pro-

bably she did not care to sit at His feet and drink in His teaching; but she loved Him with all her heart all the same, and showed it by serving. No doubt, she took care that the best dishes were carried to Jesus first, and, no doubt, as is the custom in those lands, she plied Him with invitations to partake. We do Martha less than justice if we do not honour her, and recognise that her kind of service is true service. She has many successors among Christ's true followers, who cannot 'gush' nor rise to the heights of His loftiest teaching, but who have taken Him for their Lord, and can, at any rate, do humble, practical service in kitchen or workshop. Their more 'intellectual' or poetically emotional brethren are tempted to look down on them, but Jesus is as ready to defend Martha against Mary, if she depreciates her, as He is to vindicate Mary's right to her kind of expression of love, if Martha should seek to force her own kind on her sister. 'There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.'

Mary was one of the unpractical sort, whom Martha is very apt to consider supremely useless, and often to lose patience with. Could she not find something useful to do in all the bustle of the feast? Had she no hands that could carry a dish, and no common sense that could help things on? Apparently not. Every one else was occupied, and how should she show the love that welled up in her heart as she looked at Lazarus sitting there beside Jesus? She had one costly possession, the pound of perfume. Clearly it was her own, for she would not have taken it if Lazarus and Mary had been joint owners. So, without thinking of anything but the great burden of love which she blessedly bore, she 'poured it on His head' (Mark) and on His feet, which the fashion of reclining

at meals made accessible to her, standing behind Him. True love is profuse, not to say prodigal. It knows no better use for its best than to lavish it on the beloved, and can have no higher joy than that. It does not stay to calculate utility as seen by colder eyes. It has even a subtle delight in the very absence of practical results, for the expression of itself is the purer thereby. A basin of water and a towel would have done as well or better for washing Christ's feet, but not for relieving Mary's full heart. Do we know anything of that omnipotent impulse? Can we complacently set our givings beside Mary's?

II. Judas is the foil to Mary. His sullen, black selfishness, stretching out hands like talons in eagerness to get, makes more radiant, and is itself made darker by, her shining deed of love. Goodness always rouses evil to self-assertion, and the other Evangelists connect Mary's action with Judas's final treachery as part of its impelling cause. They also show that his specious objection, by its apparent common sense and charitableness, found assent in the disciples. Three hundred pence' worth of good ointment wasted which might have helped so many poor! Yes, and how much poorer the world would have been if it had not had this story! Mary was more utilitarian than her censors. She served the highest good of all generations by her uncalculating profusion, by which the poor have gained more than some few of them might have lost.

Judas's criticism is still repeated. The world does not understand Christian self-sacrifice, for ends which seem to it shadowy as compared with the solid realities of helping material progress or satisfying material wants. A hundred critics, who do not do much for the

poor themselves, will descant on the waste of money in religious enterprises, and smile condescendingly at the enthusiasts who are so unpractical. But love knows its own meaning, and need not be abashed by the censure of the unloving.

John flashes out into a moment's indignation at the greed of Judas, which was masquerading as benevolence. His scathing laying bare of Judas's mean and thievish motive is no mere suspicion, but he must have known instances of dishonesty. When a man has gone so far in selfish greed that he has left common honesty behind him, no wonder if the sight of utterly self-surrendering love looks to him folly. The world has no instruments by which it can measure the elevation of the godly life. Mary would not be Mary if Judas approved of her or understood her.

III. Jesus vindicates the act of His censured servant. His words fall into two parts, of which the former puts a meaning into Mary's act, of which she probably had not been aware, while the latter meets the carping criticism of Judas. That Jesus should see in the anointing a reference to His burying, pathetically indicates how that near end filled His thoughts, even while sharing in the simple feast. The clear vision of the Cross so close did not so absorb Him as to make Him indifferent either to Mary's love or to the villagers' humble festivity. However weighed upon, His heart was always sufficiently at leisure from itself to care for His friends and to defend them. He accepts every offering that love brings, and, in accepting, gives it a significance beyond the offerer's thought. We know not what use He may make of our poor service; but we may be sure that, if that which we can see to is right—namely, its motive,—He will take care of what

we cannot see to—namely, its effect,—and will find noble use for the sacrifices which unloving critics pronounce useless waste.

‘The poor always ye have with you.’ Opportunities for the exercise of brotherly liberality are ever present, and therefore the obligation to it is constant. But these permanent duties do not preclude the opportunities for such special forms of expressing special love to Jesus as Mary had shown, and as must soon end. The same sense of approaching separation as in the former clause gives pathos to that restrained ‘not always.’ The fact of His being just about to leave them warranted extraordinary tokens of love, as all loving hearts know but too well. But, over and above the immediate reference of the words, they carry the wider lesson that, besides the customary duties of generous giving laid on us by the presence of ordinary poverty and distresses, there is room in Christian experience for extraordinary outflows from the fountain of a heart filled with love to Christ. The world may mock at it as useless prodigality, but Jesus sees that it is done for Him, and therefore He accepts it, and breathes meaning into it.

‘Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.’ The Evangelist who records that promise does not mention Mary’s name; John, who does mention the name, does not record the promise. It matters little whether our names are remembered, so long as Jesus bears them graven on His heart.

A NEW KIND OF KING

'On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him. The people therefore that was with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met Him, for that they heard that He had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing! behold, the world is gone after Him. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour.'—JOHN xii. 12-26.

THE difference between John's account of the entry into Jerusalem and those of the Synoptic Gospels is very characteristic. His is much briefer, but it brings the essentials out clearly, and is particular in showing its place as a link in the chain that drew on the final catastrophe, and in noting its effect on various classes.

'The next day' in verse 12 was probably the Sunday before the crucifixion. To understand the events of that day we must try to realise how rapidly, and, as the rulers thought, dangerously, excitement was rising among the crowds who had come up for the Passover, and who had heard of the raising of Lazarus. The Passover was always a time when national feeling was ready to blaze up, and any spark might light the fire. It looked as if Lazarus were going to be the match this time, and so, on the Saturday, the rulers had made up their minds to have him put out of the way in order to

stop the current that was setting in, of acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.

They had already made up their minds to dispose of Jesus, and now, with cynical contempt for justice, they determined to 'put Lazarus also to death.' So there were to be two men who were to 'die for the people.' Keeping all this wave of popular feeling in view, it might have been expected that Jesus would, as hitherto, have escaped into privacy, or discouraged the offered homage of a crowd whose Messianic ideal was so different from His.

John is mainly concerned in bringing out two points in his version of the incident. First, he tells us what we should not have gathered from the other Evangelists, that the triumphal procession began in Jerusalem, not in Bethany. It was the direct result of the ebullition of enthusiasm occasioned by the raising of Lazarus. The course of events seems to have been that 'the common people of the Jews' came streaming out to Bethany on the Sunday to gape and gaze at the risen man and Him who had raised him, that they and some of those who had been present at the raising went back to the city and carried thither the intelligence that Jesus was coming in from Bethany next day, and that then the procession to meet Him was organised.

The meaning of the popular demonstration was plain, both from the palm branches, signs of victory and rejoicing, and from the chant, which is in part taken from Psalm cxviii. The Messianic application of that quotation is made unmistakable by the addition, 'even the King of Israel.' In the Psalm, 'he that cometh in the name of Jehovah,' means the worshipper drawing near to the Temple, but the added words divert the expression to Jesus, hail Him as the King,

and invoke Him as 'Saviour.' Little did that shouting crowd understand what sort of a Saviour He was. Deliverance from Rome was what they were thinking of.

We must remember what gross, unspiritual notions of the Messiah they had, and then we are prepared to feel how strangely unlike His whole past conduct Jesus' action now was. He had shrunk from crowds and their impure enthusiasm; He had slipped away into solitude when they wished to come by force to make Him a King, and had in every possible way sought to avoid publicity and the rousing of popular excitement. Now He deliberately sets Himself to intensify it. His choice of an ass on which to ride into Jerusalem was, and would be seen by many to be, a plain appropriation to Himself of a very distinct Messianic prophecy, and must have raised the heat of the crowd by many degrees. One can fancy the roar of acclaim which hailed Him when He met the multitude, and the wild emotion with which they strewed His path with garments hastily drawn off and cast before Him.

Why did He thus contradict all His past, and court the smoky enthusiasm which He had hitherto damped? Because He knew that 'His hour' had come, and that the Cross was at hand, and He desired to bring it as speedily as might be, and thus to shorten the suffering that He would not avoid, and to finish the work which He was eager to complete. The impatience, as we might almost call it, which had marked Him on all that last journey, reached its height now, and may indicate to us for our sympathy and gratitude both His human longing to get the dark hour over and His fixed willingness to die for us.

But even while Jesus accepted the acclamations and deliberately set Himself to stir up enthusiasm, He sought to purify the gross ideas of the crowd. What more striking way could He have chosen of declaring that all the turbulent passions and eagerness for a foot-to-foot conflict with Rome which were boiling in their breasts were alien to His purposes and to the true Messianic ideal, than that choosing of the meek, slow-pacing ass to bear Him? A conquering king would have made his triumphal entry in a chariot or on a battle-horse. This strange type of monarch is throned on an ass. It was not only for a verbal fulfilment of the prophecy, but for a demonstration of the essential nature of His kingdom, that He thus entered the city.

John characteristically takes note of the effects of the entry on two classes, the disciples and the rulers. The former remembered with a sudden flash of enlightenment the meaning of the entry when the Cross and the Resurrection had taught them it. The rulers marked the popular feeling running high with bewilderment, and were, as Jesus meant them to be, made more determined to take vigorous measures to stop this madness of the mob.

The second incident in this passage contrasts remarkably with the first, and yet is, in one aspect, a continuation of it. In the former, Jesus brought into prominence the true nature of His rule by His choosing the ass to carry Him, so declaring that His dominion rested, not on conquest, but on meekness. In the latter, He reveals a yet deeper aspect of His work, and teaches that His influence over men is won by utter self-sacrifice, and that His subjects must tread the same path of losing their lives by which He passes to His glory.

The details of the incident are of small importance as compared with that great and solemn lesson; but we may note them in a few words. The desire of a few Greeks to see Him was probably only a reflection of the popular enthusiasm, and was prompted mainly by curiosity and the characteristic Greek eagerness to see any 'new thing.' The addressing of the request to Philip is perhaps explained by the fact that he 'was of Bethsaida of Galilee,' and had probably come into contact with these Greeks in the neighbouring Decapolis, on the other side of the lake. Philip's consultation of his fellow-townsmen, Andrew, who is associated with him in other places, probably implies hesitation in granting so unprecedented a request. They did not know what Jesus might say to it. And what He did say was very unlike anything that they could have anticipated.

The trivial request was as a narrow window through which Jesus' yearning spirit saw a great expanse—nothing less than the coming to Him of myriads of Gentiles, the 'much fruit' of which He immediately speaks, the 'other sheep' whom He 'must bring.' The thought must have been ever present to Him, or it would never have leaped to utterance on such an occasion. The little window shows us, too, what was habitually in His mind and heart. He, as it were, hears the striking of the hour of His glorification; in which expression the ideas of His being glorified by drawing men to the knowledge of His love, and of the Cross being not the lowest depth of His humiliation, but the highest apex of His glory—as it is always represented in this Gospel—seemed to be fused together.

The seed must die if a harvest is to spring from it.

That is the law for all moral and spiritual reformations. Every cause must have its martyrs. No man can be fruit-bearing unless he sacrifices himself. We shall not 'quicken' our fellows unless we 'die,' either literally or by the not less real martyrdom of rigid self-crucifixion and suppression.

But that necessity is not only for Apostles or missionaries of great causes; it is the condition of all true, noble life, and prescribes the path not only for those who would live for others, but for all who would truly live their own lives. Self-renunciation guards the way to the 'tree of life.' That lesson was specially needed by 'Greeks,' for ignorance of it was the worm that gnawed the blossoms of their trees, whether of art or of literature. It is no less needed by our sensuously luxurious and eagerly acquisitive generation. The world's war-cries to-day are two—'Get!' 'Enjoy!' Christ's command is, 'Renounce!' And in renouncing we shall realise both of these other aims, which they who pursue them only, never attain.

Christ's servant must be Christ's follower: indeed service is following. The Cross has aspects in which it stands alone, and is incapable of being reproduced and makes all repetition needless. But it has also an aspect in which it not only *may*, but *must*, be reproduced in every disciple. And he who takes it for the ground of his trust only, and not as the pattern of his life, has need to ask himself whether his trust in it is genuine or worth anything. Of course they who follow a leader will arrive where the leader has gone, and though our feet are feeble and our progress devious and slow, we have here His promise that we shall not be lost in the desert, but, sustained by Him will reach His side, and at last be where He is.

AFTER CHRIST: WITH CHRIST

'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be.'—JOHN xii. 26.

OUR Lord was strangely moved by the apparently trivial incident of certain Greeks desiring to see Him. He recognised and hailed in them the first-fruits of the Gentiles. The Eastern sages at His cradle, and these representatives of Western culture within a few hours of the Cross, were alike prophets. So, in His answer to their request, our Lord passes beyond the immediate bearing of the request, and contemplates it in its relation to the future developments of His work. And the thought that the Son of Man is now about to begin to be glorified, at once brings Him face to face with the fact which must precede the glory, viz., His death.

That great law that a higher life can only be reached by the decay of the lower, of which the Cross is the great instance, He illustrates, first, by an example from Nature, the corn of wheat which must die ere it brings forth fruit. Then He declares that this is a universal law, 'He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' And then He declares that this universal law, which has its adumbration in Nature, and applies to all mankind, and is manifested in its highest form on the Cross, is the law of the Christian discipleship. 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me,' and, as a consequence, 'where I am, there shall also My servant be.'

In two clauses He covers the whole ground of the present and the future. Many thinkers and teachers

have tried to crystallise their systems into some brief formula which may stick in the memory and be capable of a handy application. 'Follow Nature,' said ancient sages, attaching a nobler meaning to the condensed commandment than its modern repeaters often do; 'Follow duty,' say others; 'Follow *Me*,' says Christ. That is enough for life. And for all the dim regions beyond, this prospect is sufficient, 'Where I am, there shall also My servant be.' One Form towers above the present and the future, and they both derive their colouring and their worth from Him and our relation to Him. 'To follow'—that is the condensed summary of life's duty. 'To be with'—that is the crystallising of all our hopes.

I. The all-sufficient law for life.

'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me.' Everything is smelted down into that; and there you have a sufficient directory for every man's every action.

Now although it has nothing to do with my present purpose, I can scarcely avoid pausing, just for a moment, to ask you to consider the perfect uniqueness of such an utterance as that. Think of one Man standing up before all mankind, and coolly and deliberately saying to them, 'I am the realised Ideal of human conduct; I am Incarnate Perfection; and all of you, in all the infinite variety of condition, culture, and character, are to take Me for your pattern and your guide.' The world has listened, and the world has not laughed nor been angry. Neither indignation nor mockery, which one might have expected would have extinguished such absurdity, has waited upon Christ's utterance. I have no time to dwell on this; it is apart from my purpose, but I would ask you fairly to consider how strange it is, and to ask how it is to

be accounted for, that a Man said that, and that the wisest part of the world has consented to take Him at His own valuation; and after such an utterance as that, yet calls Him 'meek and lowly of heart.'

But I pass away from that. What does He mean by this commandment, 'Follow Me'? Of course I need not remind you that it brings all duty down to the imitation of Jesus Christ. That is a commonplace that I do not need to dwell upon, nor to follow out into the many regions into which it would lead us, and where we might find fruitful subjects of contemplation; because I desire, in a sentence or two, to insist upon the special form of following which is here enjoined. It is a very grand thing to talk about the imitation of Christ, and even in its most superficial acceptance it is a good guide for all men. But no man has penetrated to the depths of that stringent and all-comprehensive commandment who has not recognised that there is one special thing in which Christ is to be our Pattern, and that is in regard to the very thing in which we think that He is most unique and inimitable. It is His Cross, and not His life; it is His death, and not His virtues, which He is here thinking about, and laying it upon all of us as the encyclopædia and sum of all morality that we should be conformed to it. I have already pointed out to you in my introductory remarks the force of the present context. And so I need not further enlarge upon that, nor vindicate my declaration that Christ's death is the pattern which is here set before us. Of course we cannot imitate that in its effects, except in a very secondary and figurative fashion. But the spirit that underlay it, as the supreme Example of self-sacrifice, is commended to us all as the royal law for

our lives, and unless we are conformed thereto we have no right to call ourselves Christ's disciples. To die for the sake of higher life, to give up our own will utterly in obedience to God, and in the unselfish desire to help and bless others, that is the *Alpha* and the *Omega* of discipleship. It always has been so and always will be so. And so, dear brethren, let us lay it to our own hearts, and make very stringent inquiry into our own conduct, whether we have ever come within sight of what makes a true disciple—viz., that we should be 'conformable unto His death.'

Now our modern theology has far too much obscured this plain teaching of the New Testament, because it has been concerned—I do not say too much, but too exclusively, concerned—in setting forth the other aspect of Christ's death, by which it is what none of ours can ever even begin to be, the sacrifice for a world's sin. But, mind, there are two ways of looking at Christ's Cross. You must begin with recognising it as the basis of all your hope, the power by which you are delivered from sin as guilt, habit, and condemnation. And then you must take it, if it is to be the sacrifice and atonement for your sins, for the example of your lives, and mould yourselves after it. 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me,' and here is the special region in which the following is to be realised: 'He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal.'

Now, further, let me remind you that this brief, crystallised commandment, the essence of all practical godliness and Christianity, makes the blessed peculiarity of Christian morality. People ask what it is that distinguishes the teaching of the New Testament in regard to duty, from the teaching of lofty moralists and sages

of old. Not the specific precepts, though these are, in many cases, deeper. Not the individual commandments, though the perspective of human excellences and virtues has been changed in Christianity, and the gentler and sweeter graces have been enthroned in the place where the world's morality has generally set the more ostentatious ones; the hero is, roughly speaking, the world's type, the saint is the New Testament's. But the true characteristic of Christian teaching as to conduct lies in this, that the law is in a Person, and that the power to obey the law comes from the love of the Person. All things are different; unwelcome duties are made less repulsive, and hard tasks are lightened, and sorrows are made tolerable, if only we are following Him. You remember the old story in Scottish history of the knight to whom was entrusted the king's heart; how, beset by the bands of the infidels, he tossed the golden casket into the thickest of their ranks and said, 'Go on, I follow thee'; and death itself was light when that thought spurred his steed forward.

And so, brethren, it is far too hard a task to tread the road of duty which our consciences command us, unless we are drawn by Him Who is before us there on the road, and see the shining of His garments as He sets His face forward, and draws us after Him. It is easy to climb a glacier when the guide has cut with his ice-axe the steps in which he sets his feet, and we may set ours. The sternness of duty, and the rigidity of law and the coldness of 'I ought,' are all changed when duty consists in following Christ, and He is before us on the rocky and narrow road.

This precept is all-sufficient. Of course it will be a task of wisdom, of common sense, of daily culture in

prudence and other graces; to apply the generalised precept to the specific cases that emerge in our lives. But whilst the application may require a great many subordinate by-laws, the royal statute is one, and simple, and enough. 'Follow Me.' Is it not a strange thing—it seems to me to be a perfectly unique thing, inexplicable except upon one hypothesis—that a life so brief, of which the records are so fragmentary, in which some of the relationships in which we stand had no place, and which was lived out in a world so utterly different from our own, should yet avail to be a guide to men, not in regard to specific points, so much as in regard to the imperial supremacy in it of these motives—'Even Christ pleased not Himself'; 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me.'

And so, brethren, take this sharp test and apply it honestly to your own lives, day by day, in all their *minutiae* as well as in their great things. 'If any man serve Me,' how miserably that Christian 'service' has been evacuated of its deepest meaning, and superficialised and narrowed! 'Service'—that means people getting into a building and singing and praying. Service—that means acts of beneficence, teaching and preaching and giving material or spiritual helps of various kinds. These things have almost monopolised the word. But Christ enlarges its shrivelled contents once more, and teaches us that, far above all specifically so-called acts of religious worship, and more indispensable than so-called acts of Christian activity and service, lies the self-sacrificing conformity of character to Him. 'If any man serve Me,' let him sing and praise and pray? Yes; 'If any man serve Me,' let him try to help other people, and in the service of man do service to Me? Yes; but deeper than all, and fundamental to

the others, 'If any man serve Me, let him *follow Me*'.—Is that *my* discipleship? Let each one of us professing Christians ask himself.

II. We have here the all-sufficient hope for the future.

I know few things more beautiful than the perfectly *naïve* way in which the greatest of thoughts is here set forth by the simplest of figures. If two men are walking on the same road to a place, the one that is in front will get there first, and his friend that is coming up after him will get there second, if he keeps on; and they will be united at the end, because, one after the other, they travel the road. And so says Christ: 'Of course, if you follow Me, you will join Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be.' The implications of a Christian life, which is true following of Christ here, necessarily led to the confidence that in that future there will be union with Him. That is a deep thought, which might afford material for much to be said, but on which I cannot dwell now.

I remarked at an early stage of this sermon how singular it was that our Lord should present Himself as the Pattern for all human excellence. Is it not even more singular that He should venture to present His own companionship as the sufficient recompense for every sorrow, for every effort, for all pain, for all pilgrimage? To be with Him, He thinks, is enough for any man and enough for all men. Who did He think Himself to be? What did *He* suppose His relation to the rest of us to be, who could thus calmly suggest to the world that the only thing that a heart needed for blessedness was to be beside Him? And we believe it, too little as it influences our lives. 'To be with Christ' is 'very much better'; better than all beneath the stars; better than all on this side eternity.

What does our Lord mean by this all-sufficient hope? We know very little of that dim region beyond, but we know that until He comes again His departed servants are absent from the body. And, in our sense of the word, there can be no *place* for spirits thus free from corporeal environment. And so place, to-day at all events for the departed saints, and in a subordinate degree all through eternity, even when they are clothed with a glorified body, must be but a symbol of state, of condition, of spiritual character. 'Where I am there shall My servant be,' means specially '*What I am, that shall My servant be.*' This perfect conformity to that dear Lord, whose footsteps we have followed; assimilation there, which is the issue of imitation here, though broken and imperfect, this is the hope that may gladden and animate every Christian heart.

To be with Him is to be like Him, and therefore to be conscious of His presence in some fashion so intimate, so certain, as that all our earthly notions of presence, derived from the juxtaposition of corporeal frames, are infinite distance as compared with it. That is what my text dimly shadows for us. We know not how that union, which is to be as close as is possible while the distinction of personality is retained, may be accomplished. But this we know, that the coalescence of two drops of mercury, the running together of two drops of water, the blending of heart with heart here in love, are distance in comparison with the complete union of Christ and of the happy soul that rests in Him, as in an atmosphere and an ocean. Oh, brethren! it is not a thing to talk about; it is a thing to take to our hearts, and in silence to be thankful for; 'absent from the body; present with the Lord.'

And is that not enough? The ground of it is enough.

'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.' That future companionship is guaranteed to the Christian man by the words of Incarnate Truth, and by the resurrection of his Lord. The ground of it is enough, and the contents are enough—enough for faith; enough for hope; enough for peace; enough for work; and eminently enough for comfort.

Ah! there are many other questions that we would fain ask, but to which there is no reply; but as the good old rough music of one of the eighteenth-century worthies has it, we have sufficient.

' My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.'

'It is enough for the disciple that he be as' (that is, with) 'his Master.' So let us take that thought to our hearts and animate ourselves with it, for it is legitimate for us to do so. That one hope is sufficient for us all.

Only let us remember that, according to the teaching of my text, the companionship that blesses the future is the issue of following Him now. I know of no magic in death that is able to change the direction in which a man's face is turned. As he is travelling and has travelled, so he will travel when he comes through the tunnel, and out into the brighter light yonder. The line of a railway marked upon a map may stop at the boundaries of the country with which the map is concerned, but it is clearly going somewhere, and in the same direction. You want the other sheet of the map in order to see whither it is going. That is like

your life. The map stops very abruptly, but the line does not stop. Take an unfinished row of tenements. On the last house there stick out bricks preparatory to the continuation of the row. And so our lives are, as it were, studded over with protuberances and preparations for the attachment thereto of a 'house not made with hands,' and yet conformed in its architecture to the row that we have built. The man that follows will attain. For life, the all-sufficient law is, *after Christ*; for hope, the all-sufficient assurance is, *with Christ*.

THE UNIVERSAL MAGNET

'I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men unto Me.'—JOHN xii. 32.

'NEVER man spake like this Man,' said the wondering Temple officials who were sent to apprehend Jesus. There are many aspects of our Lord's teaching in which it strikes one as unique; but perhaps none is more singular than the boundless boldness of His assertions of His importance to the world. Just think of such sayings as these: 'I am the Light of the world'; 'I am the Bread of Life'; 'I am the Door'; 'A greater than Solomon is here'; 'In this place is One greater than the Temple.' We do not usually attach much importance to men's estimate of themselves; and gigantic claims such as these are generally met by incredulity or scorn. But the strange thing about Christ's loftiest assertions of His world-wide worth and personal sinlessness is that they provoke no contradiction, and that the world takes Him at His own valuation. So profound is the impression that He has made, that men assent when He says, 'I am meek and lowly in heart,' and do not answer

as they would to anybody else, 'If you were, you would never have said so.'

Now there is no more startling utterance of this extraordinary self-consciousness of Jesus Christ than the words that I have used for my text. They go deep down into the secret of His power. They open a glimpse into His inmost thoughts about Himself which He very seldom shows us. And they come to each of us with a very touching and strong personal appeal as to what we are doing with, and how we individually are responding to, that universal appeal on which He says that He is exercising.

I. So I wish to dwell on these words now, and ask you first to notice here our Lord's forecasting of the Cross.

A handful of Greeks had come up to Jerusalem to the Passover, and they desired to see Jesus, perhaps only because they had heard about Him, and to gratify some fleeting curiosity; perhaps for some deeper and more sacred reason. But in that tiny incident our Lord sees the first green blade coming up above the ground which was the prophet of an abundant harvest; the first drop of a great abundance of rain. He recognises that He is beginning to pass out from Israel into the world. But the thought of His world-wide influence thus indicated and prophesied immediately brings along with it the thought of what must be gone through before that influence can be established. And he discerns that, like the corn of wheat that falls into the ground, the condition of fruitfulness for Him is death.

Now we are to remember that our Lord here is within a few hours of Gethsemane, and a few days of the Cross, and that events had so unfolded themselves that it needed no prophet to see that there could only be one end to the duel which he had deliberately

brought about between Himself and the rulers of Israel. So that I build nothing upon the anticipation of the Cross, which comes out at this stage in our Lord's history, for any man in His position might have seen, as clearly as He did, that His path was blocked, and that very near at hand, by the grim instrument of death. But then remember that this same expression of my text occurs at a very much earlier period of our Lord's career, and that if we accept this Gospel of John, at the very beginning of it He said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up'; and that that was no mere passing thought is obvious from the fact that midway in His career, if we accept the testimony of the same Gospel, He used the same expression to cavilling opponents when He said: 'When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He.' And so at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of His career the same idea is cast into the same words, a witness of the hold that it had upon Him, and the continual presence of it to His consciousness.

I do not need to refer here to other illustrations and proofs of the same thing, only I desire to say, as plainly and strongly as I can, that modern ideas that Jesus Christ only recognised the necessity of His death at a late stage of His work, and that like other reformers, He began with buoyant hope, and thought that He had but to speak and the world would hear, and, like other reformers, was disenchanted by degrees, are, in my poor judgment, utterly baseless, and bluntly contradicted by the Gospel narratives. And so, dear brethren, this is the image that rises before us, and that ought to appeal to us all very plainly; a Christ who, from the first moment of His consciousness of Messiahship—and

how early that consciousness was I am not here to inquire—was conscious likewise of the death that was to close it. ‘He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,’ and likewise for *this* end, ‘to give His life a ransom for the many.’ That gracious, gentle life, full of all charities, and long-suffering, and sweet goodness, and patience, was not the life of a Man whose heart was at leisure from all anxiety about Himself, but the life of a Man before whom there stood, ever grim and distinct away on the horizon, the Cross and *Himself* upon it. You all remember a well-known picture that suggests the ‘Shadow of Death,’ the shadow of the Cross falling, unseen by Him, but seen with open eyes of horror by His mother. But the reality is a far more pathetic one than that; it is this, that He came on purpose to die.

But now there is another point suggested by these remarkable words, and that is that our Lord regarded the Cross of shame as exaltation or ‘lifting up.’ I do not believe that the use of this remarkable phrase in our text finds its explanation in the few inches of elevation above the surface of the ground to which the crucified victims were usually raised. That is there, of course, but there is something far deeper and more wonderful than that in the background, and it is this in part, that that Cross, to Christ’s eyes, bore a double aspect. So far as the inflictors or the externals of it were concerned, it was ignominy, shame, agony, the very lowest point of humiliation. But there was another side to it. What in one aspect is the *nadir*, the lowest point beneath men’s feet, is in another aspect the *zenith*, the very highest point in the bending heaven above us. So throughout this Gospel, and very emphatically in the text, we find that we have the complement of the

Pauline view of the Cross, which is, that it was shame and agony. For our Lord says, 'Now the hour is come when the Son of Man shall be glorified.' Whether it is glory or shame depends on what it was that bound Him there. The reason for His enduring it makes it the very climax and flaming summit of His flaming love. And, therefore, He is lifted up not merely because the Cross is elevated above the ground on the little elevation of Calvary, but that Cross is His throne, because there, in highest and sovereign fashion, are set forth His glories, the glories of His love, and of the 'grace and truth' of which He was 'full.'

So let us not forget this double aspect, and whilst we bow before Him who 'endured the Cross, despising the shame,' let us also try to understand and to feel what He means when, in the vision of it, He said, 'the hour is come that the Son of Man shall be glorified.' It was meant for mockery, but mockery veiled unsuspected truth when they twined round His pale brows the crown of thorns, thereby setting forth unconsciously the everlasting truth that sovereignty is won by suffering; and placed in His unresisting hand the sceptre of reed, thereby setting forth the deep truth of His kingdom, that dominion is exercised in gentleness. Mightier than all rods of iron, or sharp swords which conquerors wield, and more lustrous and splendid than tiaras of gold glistening with diamonds, are the sceptre of reed in the hands, and the crown of thorns on the head, of the exalted, because crucified, Man of Sorrows.

But there is still another aspect of Christ's vision of His Cross, for the 'lifting up' on it necessarily draws after it the lifting up to the dominion of the heavens. And so the Apostle, using a word kindred with that of my text, but intensifying it by addition, says, 'He

became obedient even unto the death of the Cross, wherefore God also hath highly lifted Him up.'

So here we have Christ's own conception of His death, that it was inevitable, that it was exaltation even in the act of dying, and that it drew after it, of inevitable necessity, dominion exercised from the heavens over all the earth. He was lifted up on Calvary, and because He was lifted up He has carried our manhood into the place of glory, and sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high. So much for the first point to which I would desire to turn your attention.

II. Now we have here our Lord disclosing the secret of His attractive power.

'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' That 'if' expresses no doubt, it only sets forth the condition. The Christ lifted up on the Cross is the Christ that draws men. Now I would have you notice the fact that our Lord thus unveils, as it were, where His power to influence individuals and humanity chiefly resides. He speaks about His death in altogether a different fashion from that of other men, for He does not merely say, 'If I be lifted up from the earth, this story of the Cross will draw men,' but He says, 'I will' do it; and thus contemplates, as I shall have to say in a moment, continuous personal influence all through the ages.

Now that is not how other people have to speak about their deaths, for all other men who have influenced the world for good or for evil, thinkers and benefactors, and reformers, social and religious, all of them come under the one law that their death is no part of their activity, but terminates their work, and that thereafter, with few exceptions, and for brief periods, their influence is a diminishing quantity. So

one Apostle had to say, 'To abide in the flesh is more needful for you,' and another had to say, 'I will endeavour that after my decease ye may keep in mind the things that I have told you'; and all thinkers and teachers and helpers glide away further and further, and are wrapped about with thicker and thicker mists of oblivion, and their influence becomes less and less.

The best that history can say about any of them is, 'This man, having served his generation by the will of God, fell on sleep.' But that other Man who was lifted on the Cross saw no corruption, and the death which puts a period to all other men's work was planted right in the centre of His, and was itself part of that work, and was followed by a new form of it which is to endure for ever.

The Cross is the magnet of Christianity. Jesus Christ draws men, but it is by His Cross mainly, and that He felt this profoundly is plain enough, not only from such utterances as this of my text, but, to go no further, from the fact that He has asked us to remember only one thing about Him, and has established that ordinance of the Communion or the Lord's Supper, which is to remind us always, and to bear witness to the world, of where is the centre of His work, and the fact which He most desires that men should keep in mind, not the graciousness of His words, not their wisdom, not the good deeds that He did, but 'This is My body broken for you . . . this cup is the New Testament in My blood.' A religion which has for its chief rite the symbol of a death, must enshrine that death in the very heart of the forces to which it trusts to renew the world, and to bless individual souls.

If, then, that is true, if Jesus Christ was not all

wrong when He spoke as He did in my text, then the question arises, what is it about His death that makes it the magnet that will draw all men? Men are drawn by cords of love. They may be driven by other means, but they are drawn only by love. And what is it that makes Christ's death the highest and noblest and most wonderful and transcendent manifestation of love that the world has ever seen, or ever can see? No doubt you will think me very narrow and old-fashioned when I answer the question, with the profoundest conviction of my own mind, and, I hope, the trust of my own heart. The one thing that entitles men to interpret Christ's death as the supreme manifestation of love is that it was a death voluntarily undertaken for a world's sins.

If you do not believe that, will you tell me what claim on your heart Christ has because He died? Has Socrates any claim on your heart? And are there not hundreds and thousands of martyrs who have just as much right to be regarded with reverence and affection as this Galilean carpenter's Son has, unless, when He died, He died as the Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and for yours and mine? I know all the pathetic beauty of the story. I know how many men's hearts are moved in some degree by the life and death of our Lord, who yet would hesitate to adopt the full-toned utterance which I have now been giving. But I would beseech you, dear friends, to lay this question seriously to heart, whether there is any legitimate reason for the reverence, the love, the worship, which the world is giving to this Galilean young man, if you strike out the thought that it was because He loved the world that He chose to die to loose it from the bands of its sin. It may be, it is, a most pathetic and lovely story,

but it has not power to draw all men, unless it deals with that which all men need, and unless it is the self-surrender of the Son of God for the whole world.

III. And now, lastly, we have here our Lord anticipating continuous and universal influence.

I have already drawn attention to the peculiar fullness of the form of expression in my text, which, fairly interpreted, does certainly imply that our Lord at that supreme moment looked forward, as I have already said, to His death, not as putting a period to His work, but as being the transition from one form of influence operating upon a very narrow circle, to another form of influence which would one day flood the world. I do not need to dwell upon that thought, beyond seeking to emphasise this truth, that one ought to feel that Jesus Christ has a living connection now with each of us. It is not merely that the story of the Cross is left to work its results, but, as I for my part believe, that the dear Lord, who, before He became Man, was the Light of the World, and enlightened every man that came into it, after His death is yet more the Light of the World, and is exercising influence all over the earth, not only by conscience and the light that is within us, nor only through the effects of the record of His past, but by the continuous operations of His Spirit. I do not dwell upon that thought further than to say that I beseech you to think of Jesus Christ, not as One who died for our sins only, but as one who lives to-day, and to-day, in no rhetorical exaggeration but in simple and profound truth, is ready to help and to bless and to be with every one of us. 'It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'

But, beyond that, mark His confidence of universal influence: 'I *will* draw all men.' I need not dwell upon the distinct adaptation of Christian truth, and of that sacrifice on the Cross, to the needs of all men. It is the universal remedy, for it goes direct to the universal epidemic. The thing that men and women want most, the thing that *you* want most, is that your relation with God shall be set right, and that you shall be delivered from the guilt of past sin, from the exposure to its power in the present and in the future. Whatever diversities of climate, civilisation, culture, character the world holds, every man is like every other man in this, that he has 'sinned and come short of the glory of God.' And it is because Christ's Cross goes direct to deal with that condition of things that the preaching of it is a gospel, not for this phase of society or that type of men or the other stage of culture, but that it is meant for, and is able to deliver and to bless, every man.

So, brethren, a universal attraction is raying out from Christ's Cross, and from Himself to each of us. But that universal attraction can be resisted. If a man plants his feet firmly and wide apart, and holds on with both hands to some staple or holdfast, then the drawing cannot draw. There is the attraction, but he is not attracted. You demagnetise Christianity, as all history shows, if you strike out the death on the Cross for a world's sin. What is left is not a magnet, but a bit of scrap iron. And you can take yourself away from the influence of the attraction if you will, some of us by active resistance, some of us by mere negligence, as a cord cast over some slippery body with the purpose of drawing it, may slip off, and the thing lie there unmoved.

And so I come to you now, dear friends, with the plain question, What are you doing in response to Christ's drawing of you? He has died for you on the Cross; does that not draw? He lives to bless you; does that not draw? He loves you with love changeless as a God, with love warm and emotional as a man; does that not draw? He speaks to you, I venture to say, through my poor words, and says, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest'; does that not draw? We are all in the bog. He stands on firm ground, and puts out a hand. If you like to clutch it, by the pledge of the nail-prints on the palm, He will lift you from 'the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock.' God grant that all of us may say, 'Draw us, and we will run after Thee'!

THE SON OF MAN

'... Who is this Son of Man?'—JOHN xii. 34.

I HAVE thought that a useful sermon may be devoted to the consideration of the remarkable name which our Lord gives to Himself—'the Son of Man.' And I have selected this instance of its occurrence, rather than any other, because it brings out a point which is too frequently overlooked, viz. that the name was an entirely strange and enigmatical one to the people who heard it. This question of utter bewilderment distinctly shows us that, and negatives, as it seems to me, the supposition which is often made, that the name 'Son of Man,' upon the lips of Jesus Christ, was equivalent to Messiah. Obviously there is no such significance attached to it by those who put this question. As obviously, for another reason, the two names do not cover the same

ground; for our Lord sedulously avoided calling Himself the Christ, and habitually called Himself the Son of Man.

Now one thing to observe about this name is that it is never found upon the lips of any but Jesus Christ. No man ever called him the Son of Man whilst He was upon earth, and only once do we find it applied to Him in the rest of Scripture, and that is on the occasion on which the first martyr, Stephen, dying at the foot of the old wall, saw 'the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' Two other apparent instances of the use of the expression occur, both of them in the Book of Revelation, both of them quotations from the Old Testament, and in both the more probable reading gives '*a* Son of Man,' not '*the* Son of Man.'

One more preliminary remark and I will pass to the title itself. The name has been often supposed to be taken from the remarkable prophecy in the Book of Daniel, of one 'like a son of man,' who receives from the Ancient of Days an everlasting kingdom which triumphs over those kingdoms of brute force which the prophet had seen. No doubt there is a connection between the prophecy and our Lord's use of the name, but it is to be observed that what the prophet speaks of is not 'the Son,' but 'one *like* a son of man'; or in other words, that what the prophecy dwells upon is simply the manhood of the future King in contradistinction to the bestial forms of Lion and Leopard and Bear, whose kingdoms go down before him. Of course Christ fulfils that prediction, and is the 'One like a son of man,' but we cannot say that the title is derived from the prophecy, in which, strictly speaking, it does not occur.

What, then, is the force of this name, as applied to Himself by our Lord?

First, we have in it Christ putting out His hand, if I may say so, to draw us to Himself—identifying Himself with us. Then we have, just as distinctly, Christ, by the use of this name, in a very real sense distinguishing Himself from us, and claiming to hold a unique and solitary relation to mankind. And then we have Christ, by the use of this name in its connection with the ancient prophecy, pointing us onward to a wonderful future.

I. First then, Christ thereby identifies Himself with us.

The name Son of Man, whatever more it means, declares the historical fact of His Incarnation, and the reality and genuineness, the completeness and fullness, of His assumption of humanity. And so it is significant to notice that the name is employed continually in the places in the Gospels where especial emphasis is to be placed, for some reason or other, upon our Lord's manhood, as, for instance, when He would bring into view the depth of His humiliation. It is this name that He uses when He says: 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' The use of the term there is very significant and profound; He contrasts His homelessness, not with the homes of men that dwell in palaces, but with the homes of the inferior creatures. As if He would say, 'Not merely am I individually homeless and shelterless, but I am so because I am truly a man, the only creature that builds houses, and the only creature that has not a home. Foxes have holes, anywhere they can rest, the birds of the air have,' not as our Bible gives it, 'nests,' but 'roosting-places; any bough will do for them. All living

creatures are at home in this material universe; I, as a Representative of humanity, wander a pilgrim and a sojourner.' We are all restless and homeless; the creatures correspond to their environment. We have desires and longings, wild yearnings, and deep-seated needs, that 'wander through eternity'; the Son of Man, the representative of manhood, 'hath not where to lay His head.'

Then the same expression is employed on occasions when our Lord desires to emphasise the completeness of His participation in all our conditions. As, for instance, 'the Son of Man came eating and drinking,' knowing the ordinary limitations and necessities of corporeal humanity; having the ordinary dependence upon external things; nor unwilling to taste, with pure and thankful lip, whatever gladness may be found in man's path through the supply of natural appetites.

And the name is employed habitually on occasions when He desires to emphasise His manhood as having truly taken upon itself the whole weight and weariness of man's sin, and the whole burden of man's guilt, and the whole tragicalness of the penalties thereof, as in the familiar passages, so numerous that I need only refer to them and need not attempt to quote them, in which we read of the Son of Man being 'betrayed into the hands of sinners'; or in those words, for instance, which so marvellously blend the lowliness of the Man and the lofty consciousness of the mysterious relation which He bears to the whole world; 'The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for the many.'

Now if we gather all these instances together (and

they are only specimens culled almost at random), and meditate for a moment on the Name as illuminated by such words as these, they suggest to us, first, how truly and how blessedly He is 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.' All our human joys were His. He knew all human sorrow. The ordinary wants of human nature belonged to Him; He hungered, He thirsted, and was weary; He ate and drank and slept. The ordinary wants of the human heart He knew; He was hurt by hatred, stung by ingratitude, yearned for love; His spirit expanded amongst friends, and was pained when they fell away. He fought and toiled, and sorrowed and enjoyed. He had to pray, to trust, and to weep. He was a Son of Man, a true man among men. His life was brief; we have but fragmentary records of it for three short years. In outward form it covers but a narrow area of human experience, and large tracts of human life seem to be unrepresented in it. Yet all ages and classes of men, in all circumstances, however unlike those of the peasant Rabbi who died when he was just entering mature manhood, may feel that this man comes closer to them than all beside. Whether for stimulus for duty, or for grace and patience in sorrow, or for restraint in enjoyment, or for the hallowing of all circumstances and all tasks, the presence and example of the Son of Man are sufficient. Wherever we go, we may track His footsteps by the drops of His blood upon the sharp flints that we have to tread. In all narrow passes, where the briars tear the wool of the flock, we may see, left there on the thorns, what they rent from the pure fleece of the Lamb of God that went before. The Son of Man is our Brother and our Example.

And is it not beautiful, and does it not speak to us

touchingly and sweetly of our Lord's earnest desire to get very near us and to bring us very near to Him, that this name, which emphasises humiliation and weakness and the likeness to ourselves, should be the name that is always upon His lips? Just as, if I may compare great things with small, some teacher or philanthropist, that went away from civilised into savage life, might leave behind him the name by which he was known in Europe, and adopt some barbarous designation that was significant in the language of the savage tribe to whom he was sent, and say to them: 'That is my name now, call me by that,' so this great Leader of our souls, who has landed upon our coasts with His hands full of blessings, His heart full of love, has taken a name that makes Him one of ourselves, and is never wearied of speaking to our hearts, and telling us that it is that by which He chooses to be known. It is a touch of the same infinite condescension which prompted His coming, that makes Him choose as His favourite and habitual designation the name of weakness and identification, the name 'Son of Man.'

II. But now turn to what is equally distinct and clear in this title. Here we have our Lord distinguishing Himself from us, and plainly claiming a unique relationship to the whole world.

Just fancy how absurd it would be for one of us to be perpetually insisting on the fact that he was a man, to be taking that as his continual description of himself, and pressing it upon people's attention as if there was something strange about it. The idea is preposterous; and the very frequency and emphasis with which the name comes from our Lord's lips, lead one to suspect that there is something lying behind it more than

appears on the surface. That impression is confirmed and made a conviction, if you mark the article which is prefixed, *the* Son of Man. A Son of man is a very different idea. When He says '*the* Son of Man' He seems to declare that in Himself there are gathered up all the qualities that constitute humanity; that He is, to use modern language, the realised Ideal of manhood, the typical Man, in whom is everything that belongs to manhood, and who stands forth as complete and perfect. Appropriately, then, the name is continually used with suggestions of authority and dignity contrasting with those of humiliation. 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath,' 'The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins,' and the like. So that you cannot get away from this, that this Man whom the whole world has conspired to profess to admire for His gentleness, and His meekness, and His lowliness, and His religious sanity, stood forward and said: 'I am complete and perfect, and everything that belongs to manhood you will find in Me.'

And it is very significant in this connection that the designation occurs more frequently in the first three Gospels than in the fourth; which is alleged to present higher notions of the nature and personality of Jesus Christ than are found in the other three. There are more instances in Matthew's Gospel in which our Lord calls Himself the Son of Man, with all the implication of uniqueness and completeness which that name carries; there are more even in the Gospel of the Servant, the Gospel according to Mark, than in the Gospel of the Word of God, the Gospel according to John. And so I think we are entitled to say that by this name, which the testimony of all our four Gospels makes it certain, even to the most suspicious reader, that Christ applied

to Himself, He declared His humanity, His absolutely perfect and complete humanity.

In substance He is claiming the same thing for Himself that Paul claimed for Him when he called Him 'the second Adam.' There have been two men in the world, says Paul, the fallen Adam, with his infantile and undeveloped perfections, and the Christ, with His full and complete humanity. All other men are fragments, He is the 'entire and perfect chrysolite.' As one of our epigrammatic seventeenth-century divines has it, 'Aristotle is but the rubbish of an Adam,' and Adam is but the dim outline sketch of a Jesus. Between these two there has been none. The one Man as God meant him, the type of man, the perfect humanity, the realised ideal, the home of all the powers of manhood, is He who Himself claimed that place for Himself, and stepped into it with the strange words upon His lips, 'I am meek and lowly of heart.'

'Who is this Son of Man?' Ah, brethren! 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.' A perfect Son of Man, born of a woman, 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' must be more than a Son of Man. And that moral completeness and that ideal perfection in all the faculties and parts of His nature which drove the betrayer to clash down the thirty pieces of silver in the sanctuary in despair that 'he had betrayed innocent blood'; which made Pilate wash his hands 'of the blood of this just person'; which stopped the mouths of the adversaries when He challenged them to convince Him of sin, and which all the world ever since has recognised and honoured, ought surely to lead us to ask the question, 'Who is this Son of Man?' and to answer it, as I pray we all may answer it, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!'

This fact of His absolute completeness invests His work with an altogether unique relationship to the rest of mankind. And so we find the name employed upon His own lips in connections in which He desires to set Himself forth as the single and solitary medium of all blessing and salvation to the world—as, for instance, ‘The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for the many’; ‘Ye shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’ He is what the ladder was in the vision to the patriarch, with his head upon the stone and the Syrian sky over him—the Medium of all communication between earth and heaven. And that ladder which joins heaven to earth, and brings all angels down on the solitary watchers, comes straight down, as the sunbeams do, to every man wherever he is. Each of us sees the shortest line from his own standing-place to the central light, and its beams come straight to the apple of each man’s eye. So because Christ is more than a man, because He is *the* Man, His blessings come to each of us direct and straight, as if they had been launched from the throne with a purpose and a message to us alone. Thus He who is in Himself perfect manhood touches all men, and all men touch Him, and the Son of Man, whom God hath sealed, will give to every one of us the bread from heaven. The unique relationship which brings Him into connection with every soul of man upon earth, and makes Him the Saviour, Helper, and Friend of us all, is expressed when He calls Himself the Son of Man.

III. And now one last word in regard to the predictive character of this designation.

Even if we cannot regard it as being actually a quotation of the prophecy in the Book of Daniel, there is an

evident allusion to that prophecy, and to the whole circle of ideas presented by it, of an everlasting dominion, which shall destroy all antagonistic power, and of a solemn coming for judgment of One like a Son of Man.

We find, then, the name occurring on our Lord's lips very frequently in that class of passages with which we are so familiar, and which are so numerous that I need not quote them to you; in which He speaks of the second coming of the Son of Man; as, for instance, that one which connects itself most distinctly with the Book of Daniel, the words of high solemn import before the tribunal of the High Priest. 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the glories of heaven'; or as when He says, 'He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man'; or as when the proto-martyr, with his last words, declared in sudden burst of surprise and thrill of gladness, 'I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'

Two thoughts are all that I can touch on here. The name carries with it a blessed message of the present activity and perpetual manhood of the risen Lord. Stephen does not see Him as all the rest of Scripture paints Him, *sitting* at the right hand of God, but *standing* there. The emblem of His sitting at the right hand of God represents triumphant calmness in the undisturbed confidence of victory. It declares the completeness of the work that He has done upon earth, and that all the history of the future is but the unfolding of the consequences of that work which by His own testimony was finished when He bowed His head and died. But the dying martyr sees him *standing*, as if He had sprung to His feet in response to the cry of faith from the first of

the long train of sufferers. It is as if the Emperor upon His seat, looking down upon the arena where the gladiators are contending to the death, could not sit quiet amongst the flashing axes of the lictors and the purple curtains of His throne, and see their death-struggles, but must spring to His feet to help them, or at least bend down with the look and with the reality of sympathy. So Christ, the Son of Man, bearing His manhood with Him,

‘Still bends on earth a Brother’s eye,’

and is the ever-present Helper of all struggling souls that put their trust in Him.

Then as to the other and main thought here in view—the second coming of that perfect Manhood to be our Judge. It is too solemn a subject for human lips to say much about. It has been vulgarised, and the power taken out of it by many well-meant attempts to impress it upon men’s hearts. But that coming is *certain*. That manhood could not end its relationship to us with the Cross, nor yet with the slow, solemn, upward progress which bore Him, pouring down blessings, up into the same bright cloud that had dwelt between the cherubim and had received Him into its mysterious recesses at the Transfiguration. That He should come again is the only possible completion of His work.

That Judge is our Brother. So in the deepest sense we are tried by our Peer. Man’s knowledge at its highest cannot tell the moral desert of anything that any man does. You may judge action, you may sentence for breaches of law, you may declare a man clear of any blame for such, but for any one to read the secrets of another heart is beyond human power; and if He that is the Judge were only a man

there would be wild work, and many a blunder in the sentences that were given. But when we think that it is the Son of Man that is our Judge, then we know that the Omniscience of divinity, that ponders the hearts and reads the motives, will be all blended with the tenderness and sympathy of humanity; that we shall be judged by One who knows all our frame, not only with the knowledge of a Maker, if I may so say, as from outside, but with the knowledge of a possessor, as from within; that we shall be judged by One who has fought and conquered in all temptations; and most blessed of all, that we shall be judged by One with whom we have only to plead His own work and His own love and His Cross that we may stand acquitted before His throne.

So, brethren, in that one mighty Name all the past, present, and future are gathered and blended together. In the past His Cross fills the retrospect: for the future there rises up, white and solemn, His judgment throne. 'The Son of Man is come to give His life a ransom for the many'; that is the centre point of all history. The Son of Man *shall* come to judge the world; that is the one thought that fills the future. Let us lay hold by true faith on the mighty work which He has done on the Cross, then we shall rejoice to see our Brother on the throne, when the 'judgment is set and the books are opened.' Oh, friends, cleave to Him ever in trust and love, in communion and imitation, in obedience and confession, that ye may be accounted worthy 'to stand before the Son of Man' in that day!

A PARTING WARNING

'Jesus therefore said unto them, Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.'—JOHN xii. 35, 36 (R. V.).

THESE are the last words of our Lord's public ministry. He afterwards spoke only to His followers in the sweet seclusion of the sympathetic home at Bethany, and amid the sanctities of the upper chamber. 'Yet a little while am I with you';—the sun had all but set. Two days more, and the Cross was reared on Calvary, but there was yet time to turn to the light. And so His divine charity 'hoped all things,' and continued to plead with those who had so long rejected Him. As befits a last appeal, the words unveil the heart of Christ. They are solemn with warning, radiant with promise, almost beseeching in their earnestness. He loves too well not to warn, but He will not leave the bitterness of threatening as a last savour on the palate, and so the lips, into which grace is poured, bade farewell to His enemies with the promise and the hope that even they may become 'the sons of light.'

The solemnity of the occasion, then, gives great force to the words; and the remembrance of it sets us on the right track for estimating their significance. Let us see what lessons for us there may be in Christ's last words to the world.

I. There is, first, a self-revelation.

It is no mere grammatical pedantry that draws attention to the fact that four times in this text does our Lord employ the definite article, and speak of '*the* light.' And that that is no mere accident is obvious from the fact that, in the last clause of our text, where the

general idea of light is all that is meant to be emphatic, the article is omitted. 'Yet a little while is *the* light with you; walk while ye have *the* light. . . . While ye have *the* light, believe in *the* light, that ye may be the children of light.'

So then, most distinctly here, in His final appeal to the world, He draws back the curtain, as it were, takes away the shade that had covered the lamp, and lets one full beam stream out for the last impression that He leaves. Is it not profoundly significant and impressive that then, of all times, over and over again, in the compass of these short verses, this Galilean peasant makes the tremendous assertion that He is what none other can be, in a solitary and transcendent sense, *the* Light of Mankind? Undismayed by universal rejection, unfaltering in spite of the curling lips of incredulity and scorn, unbroken by the near approach of certain martyrdom, He presents Himself before the world as its Light. Nothing in the history of mad, fanatical claims to inspiration and divine authority is to be compared with these assertions of our Lord. He is the fountal Source, He says, of all illumination; He stands before the whole race, and claims to be 'the Master-Light of all our seeing.' Whatsoever ideas of clearness of knowledge, of rapture of joy, of whiteness of purity, are symbolised by that great emblem, He declares that He manifests them all to men. Others may shine; but they are, as He said, 'lights kindled,' and therefore 'burning.' Others may shine, but they have caught their radiance from Him. All teachers, all helpers, all thinkers draw their inspiration, if they have any, from Him, in whom was life, and the Life was the Light of men.

There has been blazing in the heavens of late a

new star, that burst upon astonished astronomers in a void spot; but its brilliancy, though far transcending that of our sun, soon began to wane, and before long, apparently, there will be blackness again where there was blackness before. So all lights but His are temporary as well as derived, and men 'willing for a season to rejoice' in the fleeting splendours, and to listen to the teacher of a day, lose the illumination of his presence and guidance of his thoughts as the ages roll on. But *the* Light is 'not for an age, but for all time.'

Now, brethren, this is Christ's estimate of Himself. I dwell not on it for the purpose of seeking to exhaust its depth of significance. In it there lies the assertion that He, and He only, is the source of all valid knowledge of the deepest sort concerning God and men, and their mutual relations. In it lie the assertion that He, and He only, is the source of all true gladness that may blend with our else darkened lives, and the further assertion that from Him, and from Him alone, can flow to us the purity that shall make us pure. We have to turn to that Man close by His Cross, on whom while He spoke the penumbra of the eclipse of death was beginning to show itself, and to say to Him what the Psalmist said of old to the Jehovah whom he knew, and whom we recognise as indwelling in Jesus: 'With Thee is the fountain of life. Thou makest us to drink of the river of Thy pleasures. In Thy light shall we see light.'

So Christ thought of Himself; so Christ would have us to think of Him. And it becomes a question for us how, if we refuse to accept that claim of a solitary, underived, eternal, and universal power of illuminating mankind, we can save His character for the veneration

of the world. We cannot go picking and choosing amongst the Master's words, and say 'This is historical, and that mythical.' We cannot select some of them, and leave others on one side. You must take the whole Christ if you take any Christ. And the whole Christ is He who, within sight of Calvary, and in the face of all but universal rejection, lifted up His voice, and, as His valediction to the world, declared, 'I am the Light of the world.' So He says to us. Oh that we all might cast ourselves before Him, with the cry, 'Lighten our darkness, O Lord, we beseech Thee!'

II. Secondly, we have here a double exhortation.

'Walk in the light; believe in the light.' These two sum up all our duties; or rather, unveil for us the whole fullness of the possible privileges and blessings of which our relation to that light is capable. It is obvious that the latter of them is the deeper in idea, and the prior in order of sequence. There must be the 'belief' in the light before there is the 'walk' in the light. Walking includes the ideas of external activity and of progress. And so, putting these two exhortations together, we get the whole of Christianity considered as subjective. 'Believe in the light; trust in the light,' and then 'walk' in it. A word, then, about each of these branches of this double exhortation.

'Trust in the light.' The figure seems to be dropped at first sight; for it wants little faith to believe in the sunshine at midday; and when the light is pouring out, how can a man but see it? But the apparent incongruity of the metaphor points to something very deep in regard to the spiritual side. We cannot but believe in the light that meets the eye when it meets it, but it is possible for a man to blind himself to the

shining of this light. Therefore the exhortation is needed—'Believe in the light,' for only by believing it can you see it. Just as the eye is the organ of sight, just as its nerves are sensitive to the mysterious finger of the beam, just as on its mirroring surface impinges the gentle but mighty force that has winged its way across all the space between us and the sun, and yet falls without hurting, so faith, the 'inward eye which makes the bliss' of the solitary soul, is the one organ by which you and I can see the light. 'Seeing is believing,' says the old proverb. That is true in regard to the physical. Believing is seeing, is much rather the way to put it in regard to the spiritual and divine.

Only as we trust the light do we see the light. Unless you and I put our confidence in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, we have no adequate knowledge of Him and no clear vision of Him. We must know that we may love; but we must love that we may know. We must believe that we may see. True, we must see that we may believe, but the preliminary vision which precedes belief is slight and dim as compared with the solidity and the depth of assurance with which we apprehend the reality and know the lustre of Him whom our faith has grasped. You will never know the glory of the light, nor the sweetness with which it falls upon the gazing eye, until you turn your face to that Master, and so receive on your susceptible and waiting heart the warmth and the radiance which He only can bestow. 'Believe in the light.' Trust it; or rather, trust Him who is it. He cannot deceive. This light from heaven can never lead astray. Absolutely we may rely upon it; unconditionally we must follow it. Lean upon Him—to take

another metaphor—with all your weight. His arm is strong to bear the burden of our weaknesses, sorrows, and, above all, our sins. 'While ye have light, trust the light.'

But then that is not enough. Man, with his double relations, must have an active and external as well as an inward and contemplative life. And so our Lord, side by side with the exhortation on which I have been touching, puts the other one, 'Walk in the light.' Your inward emotions, however deep and precious, however real the affiance, however whole-hearted the love, are maimed and stunted, and not what the light requires, unless there follows upon them the activity of the walk. What do we get the daylight for? To sit and gaze at it? By no means; but that it may guide us upon our path and help us in all our work. And so all Christian people need ever to remember that Jesus Christ has indissolubly bound together these two phases of our relation to Him as the light of life—inward and blessed contemplation by faith and outward practical activity. To walk is, of course, the familiar metaphor for the external life of man, and all our deeds are to be in conformity with the Light, and in communion with Him. This is the deepest designation, perhaps, of the true character of a Christian life in its external aspect—that it walks in Christ, doing nothing but as His light shines, and ever bearing along with it conscious fellowship with Him who is thus the guiding and irradiating and gladdening and sanctifying life of our lives. '*Walk in the light as He is in the light.*' Our days fleet and change; His are stable and the same. For, although these words which I have quoted, in their original application refer to God the Father, they are no less true about Him

who rests at the right hand of God, and is one light with Him. He is in the light. We may approximate to that stable and calm radiance, even though our lives are passed through changing scenes, and effort and struggle are their characteristics. And oh! how blessed, brother, such a life will be, all gladdened by the unsetting and unclouded sunshine that even in the shadiest places shines, and turns the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death into solemn light; teaching gloom to glow with a hidden sun!

But there is not only the idea of activity here, there is the further notion of progress. Unless Christian people to their faith add work, and have both their faith and their consequent work in a continual condition of progress and growth, there is little reason to believe that they apprehend the light at all. If you trust the light you will walk in it; and if your days are not in conformity nor in communion with Him, and are not advancing nearer and nearer to the central blaze, then it becomes you to ask yourselves whether you have verily seen at all, or trusted at all, 'the Light of life.'

III. Thirdly, there is here a warning.

'Walk whilst ye have the light, lest the darkness come upon you.' That is the summing up of the whole history of that stiff-necked and marvellous people. For what has all the history of Israel been since that day but groping in the wilderness without any pillar of fire? But there is more than that in it. Christ gives us this one solemn warning of what falls on us if we turn away from Him. Rejected light is the parent of the densest darkness, and the man who, having the light, does not trust it, piles around himself thick clouds of obscurity and gloom, far more doleful

and impenetrable than the twilight that glimmers round the men who have never known the daylight of revelation. The history of un-Christian and anti-Christian Christendom is a terrible commentary upon these words of the Master, and the cries that we hear all round us to-day from men who will not follow the light of Christ, and moan or boast that they dwell in agnostic darkness, tell us that, of all the eclipses that can fall upon heart and mind, there is none so dismal or thunderously dark as that of the men who, having seen the light of Christ in the sky, have turned from it and said, 'It is no light, it is only a mock sun.' Brethren, tempt not that fate.

And if Christian men and women do not advance in their knowledge and their conformity, like clouds of darkness will fall upon them. None is so hopeless as the unprogressive Christian, none so far away as those who have been brought nigh and have never come any nigher. If you believe the light, see that you growingly trust and walk in it, else darkness will come upon you, and you will not know whither you go.

IV. And lastly, there is here a hope and a promise. 'That ye may be the sons of light.'

Faith and obedience turn a man into the likeness of that in which he trusts. If we trust Jesus we open our hearts to Him; and if we open our hearts to Him He will come in. If you are in a darkened room, what have you to do in order to have it filled with glad sunshine? Open the shutters and pull up the blinds, and the light will do all the rest. If you trust the light, it will rush in and fill every crevice and cranny of your hearts. Faith and obedience will mould us, by their natural effect, into the resemblance of that on

which we lean. As one of the old German mystics said, 'What thou lovest, that thou dost become.' And it is blessedly true. The same principle makes Christians like Christ, and makes idolaters like their gods. 'They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them,' says one of the Psalms. 'They followed after vanity and are become vain,' says the chronicler of Israel's defections. 'We with unveiled faces beholding'—or mirroring—'the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.' Trust the light and you become 'sons of the light.'

And so, dear friends, all of us may hope that by degrees, as the reward of faith and of walking, we still may bear the image of the heavenly, even here on earth. While as yet we only believe in the light, we may participate in its transforming power, like some far-off planet on the utmost bounds of some solar system, that receives faint and small supplies of light and warmth, through a thick atmosphere of vapour, and across immeasurable spaces. But we have the assurance that we shall be carried nearer our centre, and then, like the planets that are closer to the sun than our earth is, we shall feel the fuller power of the heat, and be saturated with the glory of the light. 'We shall see Him as He is'; and then we too 'shall blaze forth like the sun in the kingdom of our Father.'

THE LOVE OF THE DEPARTING CHRIST

'... When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.'—JOHN xiii. 1.

THE latter half of St. John's Gospel, which begins with these words, is the Holy of Holies of the New

Testament. Nowhere else do the blended lights of our Lord's superhuman dignity and human tenderness shine with such lambent brightness. Nowhere else is His speech at once so simple and so deep. Nowhere else have we the heart of God so unveiled to us. On no other page, even of the Bible, have so many eyes, glistening with tears, looked and had the tears dried. The immortal words which Christ spoke in that upper chamber are His highest self-revelation in speech, even as the Cross to which they led up is His most perfect self-revelation in act.

To this most sacred part of the New Testament my text is the introduction. It unveils to us gleams of Christ's heart, and does what the Evangelists very seldom venture to do, viz. gives us some sort of analysis of the influences which then determined the flow and the shape of our Lord's love.

Many good commentators prefer to read the last words of my text, 'He loved them unto the *uttermost*' rather than 'unto the *end*'—so taking them to express the depth and degree rather than the permanence and perpetuity of our Lord's love. And that seems to me to be by far the worthier and the nobler meaning, as well as the one which is borne out by the usual signification of the expression in other Greek authors. It is much to know that the emotions of these last moments did not interrupt Christ's love. It is even more to know that in some sense they perfected it, giving even a greater vitality to its tenderness, and a more precious sweetness to its manifestations. So understood, the words explain for us why it was that in the sanctity of the upper chamber there ensued the marvellous act of the foot-washing, the marvellous discourses which follow, and

the climax of all, that High-priestly prayer. They give utterance to a love which Christ's consciousness at that solemn hour tended to shapen and to deepen.

So, under the Evangelist's guidance, we may venture to gaze at least a little way into these depths, and with all reverence to try and see something at all events of the fringe and surface of the love 'which passeth knowledge.' 'Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, loved them then unto the uttermost.'

My object will be best accomplished by simply following the guidance of the words before us, and asking you to look first at that love as a love which was not interrupted, but perfected by the prospect of separation.

I. It would take us much too far away, however interesting the contemplation might be, to dwell with any particularity upon our Lord's consciousness as it is here set forth in that 'He knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father.' But I can scarcely avoid noticing, though only in a few sentences, the salient points of that Christ-consciousness as it is set forth here.

'He knew that His hour was come.' All His life was passed under the consciousness of a divine necessity laid upon Him, to which He lovingly and cheerfully yielded Himself. On His lips there are no words more significant, and few more frequent, than that divine 'I must!' 'It behoves the Son of Man' to do this, that, and the other—yielding to the necessity imposed by the Father's will, and sealed by His own loving resolve to be the Saviour of the world. And in like manner, all through His life He declares Him-

self conscious of the hours which mark the several crises and stages of His mission. They come to Him and He discerns them. No external power can coerce Him to any act till the hour come. No external power can hinder Him from the act when it comes. When the hour strikes He hears the phantom sound of the bell; and, hearing, He obeys. And thus, at the last and supreme moment, to Him it dawned unquestionable and irrevocable. How did He meet it? Whilst on the one hand there was the shrinking of which we have such pathetic testimony in the broken prayer that He Himself amended—‘Father! save Me from this hour. . . . Yet for this cause came I unto this hour,’—there is a strange, triumphant joy, blending with the shrinking, that the decisive hour is at last come.

Mark, too, the form which the consciousness took—not that now the hour had come for suffering or death or bearing the sins of the world—all which aspects of it were nevertheless present to Him, as we know; but that now He was soon to leave all the world beneath Him and to return to the Father.

The terror, the agony, the shame, the mysterious burden of a world’s sins were now to be laid upon Him—all these elements are submerged, as it were, and become less conspicuous than the one thought of leaving behind all the limitations, and the humiliations, and the compelled association with evil which, like a burning brand laid upon a tender skin, was an hourly and momentary agony to Him, and soaring above them all, unto His own calm home, His habitation from eternity with the Father, as He had been before the world was. How strange this blending of shrinking and of eagerness, of sorrow and of joy, of human trembling consciousness of impending death.

and of triumphant consciousness of the approach of the hour when the Son of Man, even in His bitterest agony and deepest humiliation, should, paradoxically, be glorified, and should 'leave the world to go unto the Father'!

We cannot enter with any particularity or depth into this marvellous and unique consciousness, but it is set forth here—and that is the point to which especially I desire to turn your attention—as the basis and the reason for a special tenderness softening His voice, and taking possession of His heart, as He thought of the impending separation.

And is that not beautiful? And does it not help us to realise how truly 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' and bearing a heart thrilling with all innocent human emotions that divine Saviour was? We, too, have known what it is to feel, because of approaching separation from dear ones, the need for a tenderer tenderness. At such moments the masks of use and wont drop away, and we are eager to find some word, to put our whole souls into some look, our whole strength into one clinging embrace that may express all our love, and may be a joy to two hearts for ever after to remember. The Master knew that longing, and felt the pain of separation; and He, too, yielded to the human impulse which makes the thought of parting the key to unlock the hidden chambers of the most jealously guarded heart, and let the shyest of its emotions come out for once into the daylight. So, 'knowing that His hour was come, He loved them unto the uttermost.'

But there is not only in this a wonderful expression of the true humanity of the Christ, but along with that a suggestion of something more sacred and

deeper still. For surely amidst all the parting scenes that the world's literature has enshrined, amidst all the examples of self-oblivion at the last moment, when a martyr has been the comforter of his weeping friends, there are none that without degradation to this can be set by the side of this supreme and unique instance of self-oblivion. Did not Christ, for the sake of that handful of poor people, first and directly, and for the rest of us afterwards, of course, secondarily and indirectly, so suppress all the natural emotions of these last moments as that their absolute absence is unique and singular, and points onwards to something more, viz. that this Man who was susceptible of all human affections, and loved us with a love which is not merely high above our grasp, absolute, perfect, changeless and divine, but with a love like our own human affection, had also more than a man's heart to give us, and gave us more, when, that He might comfort and sustain, He crushed down Himself and went to the Cross with words of tenderness and consolation and encouragement for others upon His lips? Knowing all that was lying before Him, He was neither absorbed nor confounded, but carried a heart at leisure to love even then 'unto the uttermost.'

And if the prospect only sharpened and perfected, nor interrupted for one instant the flow of His love, the reality has no power to do aught else. In the glory, when He reached it, He poured out the same loving heart; and to-day He looks down upon us with the same Face that bent over the table in the upper room, and the same tenderness flows to us. When John saw his Master next, after His Ascension, amidst the glories of the vision in his rocky Patmos, though His face was as the sun shineth in his strength, it was

the old face. Though His hand bore the stars in a cluster, it was the hand that had been pierced with the nails. Though the breast was girded with the golden girdle of sovereignty and of priesthood, it was the breast on which John's happy head had lain; and though the 'Voice was as the sound of many waters,' it soothed itself to a murmur, gentle as that with which the tideless sea about him rippled upon the silvery sand when He said, 'Fear not . . . I am the First and the Last.' Knowing that He goes to the Father, He loves to the uttermost, and being with the Father, He still so loves.

II. And now I must, with somewhat less of detail, dwell upon the other points which this text brings out for us. It suggests to us next that we have in the love of Jesus Christ a love which is faithful to the obligations of its own past.

Having loved, He loves. Because He had been a certain thing, therefore He is and He shall be that same. That is an argument that implies divinity. About nothing human can we say that because it has been therefore it shall be. Alas! about much that is human we have to say the converse, that because it has been, therefore it will cease to be. And though, blessed be God! they are few and they are poor who have had no experience in their lives of human hearts whose love in the past has been such that it manifestly is for ever, yet we cannot with the same absolute confidence say about one another, even about the dearest, 'Having loved, he loves.' But we can say so about Christ. There is no exhaustion in that great stream that pours out from His heart; no diminution in its flow.

They tell us that the central light of our system, that great sun itself, pouring out its rays exhausts its

warmth, and were it not continually replenished, must gradually, and even though continually replenished, will ultimately cease to blaze, and be a dead, cold mass of ashes. But this central Light, this heart of Christ, which is the Sun of the World, will endure like the sun, and after the sun is cold, His love will last for ever. He pours it out and has none the less to give. There is no bankruptcy in His expenditure, no exhaustion in His effort, no diminution in His stores. 'Thy mercy endureth for ever'; 'Thou hast loved, therefore Thou wilt love' is an inference for time and for eternity, on which we may build and rest secure.

III. Then, still further, we have here this love suggested as being a love which has special tenderness towards its own. 'Having loved His own, He loved them to the uttermost.'

These poor men who, with all their errors, did cleave to Him; who, in some dim way, understood somewhat of His greatness and His sweetness—and do you and I do more?—who, with all their sins, yet were true to Him in the main; who had surrendered very much to follow Him, and had identified themselves with Him, were they to have no special place in His heart because in that heart the whole world lay? Is there any reason why we should be afraid of saying that the universal love of Jesus Christ, which gathers into His bosom all mankind, does fall with special tenderness and sweetness upon those who have made Him theirs and have surrendered themselves to be His? Surely it must be that He has special nearness to those who love Him; surely it is reasonable that He should have special delight in those who try to resemble Him; surely it is only what one might expect of Him that He should in

a special manner honour the drafts, so to speak, of those who have confidence in Him, and are building their whole lives upon Him. Surely, because the sun shines down upon dunghills and all impurities, that is no reason why it should not lie with special brightness on the polished mirror that reflects its lustre. Surely, because Jesus Christ loves—Blessed be His name!—the publicans and the harlots and the outcasts and the sinners, that is no reason why He should not bend with special tenderness over those who, loving Him, try to serve Him, and have set their whole hopes upon Him. The rainbow strides across the sky, but there is a rainbow in every little dewdrop that hangs glistening on the blades of grass. There is nothing limited, nothing sectional, nothing narrow in the proclamation of a special tenderness of Christ towards His own, when you accompany with that truth this other, that all men are besought by Him to come into that circle of 'His own,' and that only they themselves shut any out therefrom. Blessed be His name! the whole world dwells in His love, but there is an inner chamber in which He discovers all His heart to those who find in that heart their Heaven and their all. 'He came to His own,' in the wider sense of the word, and 'His own received Him not'; but also, 'having loved His own He loved them unto the end.' There are textures and lives which can only absorb some of the rays of light in the spectrum; some that are only capable of taking, so to speak, the violet rays of judgment and of wrath, and some who open their hearts for the ruddy brightness at the other end of the line. Do you see to it, brethren, that you are of that inner circle who receive the whole Christ into their hearts, and to whom He can unfold the fullness of His love

IV. And, lastly, my text suggests that love of Christ as being made specially tender by the necessities and the dangers of His friends. 'He loved His own which were in the world,' and so loving them, 'loved them to the uttermost.'

We have, running through these precious discourses which follow my text, many allusions to the separation which was to ensue, and to His leaving His followers in circumstances of peculiar peril, defenceless and solitary. 'I come unto Thee, and am no more in the world,' says He in the final High-priestly prayer, 'but these are in the world. Holy Father, keep them through Thine own name.' The same contrast between the certain security of the Shepherd and the troubled perils of the scattered flock seems to be in the words of my text, and suggests a sweet and blessed reason for the special tenderness with which He looked upon them. As a dying father on his deathbed may yearn over orphans that he is leaving defenceless, so Christ is here represented as conscious of an accession even to the tender longings of His heart, when He thought of the loneliness and the dangers to which His followers were to be exposed.

Ah! It seems a harsh contrast between the Emperor, sitting throned there between the purple curtains, and the poor athletes wrestling in the arena below. It seems strange to think that a loving Master has gone up into the mountain, and has left His disciples to toil in rowing on the stormy sea of life; but the contrast is only apparent. For you and I, if we love and trust Him, are with Him 'in the heavenly places' even whilst we toil here, and He is with us, working with us, even whilst He 'sitteth at the right hand of God.'

We may be sure of this, brethren, that that love ever

increases its manifestations according to our deepening necessities. The darker the night the more lustrous the stars. The deeper, the narrower, the savager, the Alpine gorge, usually the fuller and the swifter the stream that runs through it. And the more that enemies and fears gather round about us, the sweeter will be the accents of our Comforter's voice, and the fuller will be the gifts of tenderness and grace with which He draws near to us. Our sorrows, dangers, necessities, are doors through which His love can come nigh.

So, dear friends, we have had experience of sweet and transient human love; we have had experience of changeful and ineffectual love; turn away from them all to this immortal, deep heart of Christ's, welling over with a love which no change can affect, which no separation can diminish, which no sin can provoke, which becomes greater and tenderer as our necessities increase, and ask Him to fill your hearts with that, that you may 'know the length and breadth and depth and height of that love which passeth knowledge,' and so 'be filled with all the fullness of God.'

THE SERVANT-MASTER

'Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.'—JOHN xiii. 3-5.

It has been suggested that the dispute as to 'which was the greatest,' which broke the sanctities of the upper chamber, was connected with the unwillingness of each of the Apostles to perform the menial office of washing the feet of his companions. They had come in

from Bethany, and needed the service. But apparently it was omitted, and although we can scarcely suppose that the transcendent act which is recorded in my text was performed at the beginning of the meal, yet I think we shall not be wrong if we see in it a reference to the neglected service.

The Evangelist who tells us of the dispute, and does not tell us of the foot-washing, preserves a sentence which finds its true meaning only in this incident, 'I am among you as He that serveth.' And although John is the only recorder of this pathetic incident, there are allusions in other parts of Scripture which seem to hint at it. As, for instance, when Paul speaks of 'taking upon Him the form of a servant'; and still more strikingly when Peter employs the remarkable word, which he does employ in his exhortation, 'Be ye clothed with humility.' For the word rendered there 'clothed' occurs only in that one place in Scripture, and means literally the putting on of a slave's costume. One can scarcely help, then, seeing in these three passages to which I have referred echoes of this incident which John alone preserves to us. And so we get at once a hint of the harmony and of the incompleteness of the Gospel records.

I. Consider the motives of this act.

Now that is ground upon which the Evangelists very seldom enter. They tell us what Christ did, but very rarely do they give us any glimpses into why He did it. But this section of the Gospel is remarkable for its full and careful analysis of what Christ's impelling motives were in the final acts of His life. How did John find out why Christ did this deed? Perhaps he who had 'leaned upon His bosom at supper,' and was evidently very closely associated with Him, may, in

some unrecorded hour of intimate communion during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, have heard from the Master the exposition of His motives. But more probably, I think, the long years of growing likeness to his Lord, and of meditation upon the depth of meaning in the smallest events that his faithful memory recalled, taught him to understand Christ's purpose and motives. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him,' and the liker we get to our Master and the more we are filled with His Spirit, the more easy will it be for us to divine the purpose and the motives of His actions, whether as they are recorded in the Scripture or as they come to us in the experience of daily life.

But, passing that point, I desire for a moment to fix your attention on the twofold key to our Lord's action which is given in this context. There is, first of all, in the first verse of the chapter, a general exposition of what was uppermost in His mind and heart during the whole of the period in the upper room. The act in our text, and the wonderful words which follow in the subsequent chapters, crowned by that great intercessory prayer, seem to me to be all explained for us by this first unveiling of His motives. 'When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.'

And then the words of my text, which apply more specifically to the single incident with which they are brought into connection, tell us in addition why this one manifestation of Christ's love was given. 'Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.' There, then, are two explanations of motive, the one

covering a wider area than the other, but both converging on the incident before us.

The first of these is just this—the consciousness of impending separation moved Christ to a more than ordinarily tender manifestation of His love. For the rendering which you will find in the margin of the Revised Version, ‘He loved them *to the uttermost*,’ seems to me to be truer to the Evangelist’s meaning than the other, ‘He loved them unto the end.’ For it was more to John’s purpose to tell us that the shadow of the Cross only brought to the surface in more blessed and wonderful representation the deep love of His heart, than simply to tell us that that shadow did not stop its flow. It is much to know that all through His sorrow He continued to love; it is far more to know that the sorrow sharpened its poignancy, and deepened its depth, and made more tender its tenderness.

How near to the man Christ that thought brings us! Do we not all know the impulse to make parting moments tender moments? The masks of use and wont drop off; the reticence which we, perhaps wisely, ordinarily cultivate in regard to our deepest feelings melts away. We yearn to condense all our unspoken love into some one word, act, look, or embrace, which it may afterwards be life to two hearts to remember. And Jesus Christ felt this. Because He was going away He could not but pour out Himself yet more completely than in the ordinary tenor of His life. The earthquake lays bare hidden veins of gold, and the heart opens itself out when separation impends. We shall never understand the works of Jesus Christ if we do as we are all apt to do, think of them as having only a didactic and doctrinal purpose. We must remember that there is in Him the true play of a human heart.

and that it was to relieve His own love, as well as to teach these men their duty, that He rose from the supper, and prepared Himself to wash the disciples' feet.

Then, on the other hand, the other motive which is brought by the Evangelists more immediately into connection with this incident is, 'knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.'

The consciousness of the highest dignity impels to the lowliest submission. 'All things given into His hands,' means universal and absolute dominion. 'That He was come from God,' means pre-existence, voluntary incarnation, an eternal divine nature, and unbroken communion with the Father. 'That He went to God,' means a voluntary departure from this low world, and a return to 'His own calm home, His habitation from eternity.'

And, gathered all together, the phrases imply His absolute consciousness of His divine nature. It was that that sent Him with the towel round His loins to wash the foul feet of the pedestrians who had come by the dusty and hot way from Bethany, and through all the abominations of an Eastern city, into the upper chamber.

This was He who from the beginning 'was with God, and was God.' This was He who was the Lord of Death, Victor over the grave. This was He who by His own power ascended up on high, and reigns on the throne of the universe to-day. This was He whose breast the same Evangelist had seen before he wrote his Gospel, 'girded with the golden girdle' of priesthood and of sovereignty; and holding, in the hands that had laid the towel on the disciples' feet, the seven stars.

Oh, brethren! if we believed our creeds, how our hearts would melt with wonder and awe that He who was so high stooped so low! 'Knowing that He came from God, and went to God,' and that even when He was kneeling there before these men, 'the Father had given all things into His hands,' what did He do? Triumph? Show His majesty? Flash His power? Demand service? 'Girded Himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet'!

The consciousness of loftiness does not alone avail to explain the transcendent lowliness. You need the former motive to be joined with it, because it is only love which bends loftiness to service, and turns the consciousness of superiority into yearning to divest oneself of the superiorities that separate, and to emphasise the emotions which unite.

II. The detailed completeness of the act.

The remarkable particularity of the account of the stages of the humiliation suggests the eye-witness. John carried them all in his mind ineffaceably, and long, long years after that memorable hour we hear him recalling each detail of the scene. We can see the little group startled by the disturbance of the order of the meal as He rose from the table, and the hushed wonder and the open-lipped expectation with which they watched to see what the next step would be. He rises from the table and divests Himself of the upper garments which impeded movement. 'What will He do next?' He takes the basin, standing there to be ready for washing the apostles' feet, but unused, and not even filled with water. He fills it Himself, asking none to help Him. He girds the towel round Him; and then, perhaps, begins with the betrayer; at any rate, not with Peter.

Cannot you see them, as they look? Do not you feel the solemnity of the detailed particular account of each step?

And may we not also say that all is a parable, or illustration, on a lower level, of the very same principles which were at work in the mightier fact of the greater condescension of His 'becoming flesh and dwelling among us'? He 'rose from the table,' as He rose from His place in 'the bosom of the Father.' He disturbed the meal as He broke the festivities of the heavens. He divested Himself of His garments, as 'He thought not equality with God a thing to be worn eagerly'; and 'He girded Himself with the towel,' as He put on the weakness of flesh. Himself He filled the basin, by His own work providing the means of cleansing; and Himself applied the cleansing to the feet of those who were with Him. It is all a working out of the same double motive which drew Him downwards to our earth. The reason why He stooped, with His hands to wash the disciples' feet, is the same as the reason why He had hands to wash with—viz., that knowing Himself to be high over all, and loving all, He chose to become one with us, that we might become like unto Him. So the details of the act are a parable of His incarnation and death.

III. And then, still further, note the purpose of the deed.

Now although I have said that we never rightly understand our Lord's actions if we are always looking for dogmatic or doctrinal purposes, and thinking of them rather as being lectures, and sometimes rebukes in act, than as being the outgush of His emotions and His human-divine nature, yet we have also to take

into account their moral and spiritual lessons. His acts are words and His words are acts. And although the main and primary purpose of this incident, in so far as it had any other purpose than to relieve Christ's own love by manifesting itself, and to comfort the disciples' hearts by the tender manifestation, was to teach them their duty, as we shall presently see, yet the special aspect of cleansing, which comes out so emphatically and prominently in the episode of Peter's refusal, is to be carried all along through the interpretation of the incident. This was the reason why Jesus Christ came from heaven and assumed flesh, and this was the reason why Jesus Christ, assuming flesh, bowed Himself to this menial office—to make men clean.

I venture to say that we never understand Jesus Christ and His work until we recognise this as its prominent purpose, to cleanse us from sin. An inadequate conception of what we need, shallow, superficial views of the gravity and universality and obstinacy of the fact of sin, are an impenetrable veil between us and all real understanding of Jesus Christ. There is no adequate motive for such an astounding fact as the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God, except the purpose of redeeming the world. If you do not believe that you—you individually, and all of us your brethren—need to be cleansed, you will find it hard to believe in the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ. If you have been down into the depths of your own heart, and found out what tremendous, diabolic power your own evil nature and sin have upon you, then you will not be content with anything less than the incarnate God who stoops from heaven to bear the burden of your sin, and to take it all away. If you want to understand why He laid aside His garments

and took the servile form of our manhood, the appeal of man's sin to His love and the answer of His Divine condescension are the only explanation.

Again, let me remind you that there is no cleansing without Christ. Can you do it for yourselves, do you think? There is an old proverb, 'One hand washes the other.' That is true about stains on the flesh. It is not true about stains on our spirits. Nobody can do it for us but Jesus Christ alone. He kneels before us, having the right and the power to wash us because He has died for us. Kings of England used to touch for 'the king's evil,' and lay their pure fingers upon feculent masses of corruption. Our King's touch is sovereign for the corruption and incipient putrefaction of our sin; and there is no power in heaven or earth that will make a man clean except the power of Jesus Christ. It is either Jesus Christ or filthiness.

If I might pass from my text for one moment, I would remind you of the episode which immediately follows, and suggest that if Jesus Christ is not cleansing us He is nothing to us. 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in Me.' I know, of course, that it is possible to have partial, rudimentary, and sometimes reverent conceptions of that Lord without recognising in Him the great 'Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.' But I am sure of this, that there is no real, living possession of Jesus Christ such as men's souls need, and such as will outlast the disintegrating influences of death, unless it be such a possession of Him as appropriates for its own, primarily, His cleansing power. First of all He must cleanse, and then all other aspects of His glory, and gifts of His grace, will pour into our hearts.

No understanding of Christ, then, without the recog-

tion that cleansing is the purpose and the vindication of His incarnation and sacrifice; no cleansing without Christ; no Christ worth calling by the name without cleansing.

IV. And so, lastly, note the pattern in this act.

You will remember that it is followed by solemn words spoken after He had taken His garments and resumed His place at the table, in which there blended, in the most wonderful fashion, the consciousness of authority, both as Teacher of truth and as Guide of life, and the sweetest and most loving lowliness. In them Jesus prescribed the wonderful act of His condescending love and cleansing power as the law of the Christian life. There are too many of us who profess to be quite willing to trust to Jesus Christ as the Cleanser of our souls who are not nearly so willing to accept His Example as the pattern for our lives; and I would have you note, as an extremely remarkable point, that all the New Testament references to our Lord as being our Example are given in immediate connection with His passion. The very part of His life which we generally regard as being most absolutely unique and inimitable is the fact in His life which Apostles and Evangelists select as the one to set before us for our example.

Do you ask if any man can copy the sufferings of Jesus Christ? In regard to their virtue and efficacy, No. In regard to their motive—in one aspect, No; in another aspect, Yes. In regard to the spirit that impelled Him we may copy Him. The smallest trickle of water down a city gutter will carve out of the mud at its side little banks and cliffs, and exhibit all the phenomena of erosion on the largest scale, as the Mississippi does over half a continent, and the tiniest

little wave in a basin will fall into the same curves as the billows of mid-ocean. You and I, in our little lives, may even aspire to 'do *as* I have done to you.'

The true use of superiority is service. *Noblesse oblige!* Rank, wealth, capacity, talents, all things are given to us that we may use them to the last particle for our fellows. Only when the world and society have awakened to that great truth which the towel-girded, kneeling Christ has taught us, will society be organised on the principles that God meant.

But, further, the highest form of service is to cleanse. Cleansing is always dirty work for the cleaners, as every housemaid knows. You cannot make people clean by scolding them, by lecturing them, by patronising them. You have to go down into the filth if you mean to lift them out of it; and leave your smelling-bottles behind; and think nothing repulsive if your stooping to it may save a brother.

The only way by which we can imitate that example is by, first of all, participating in it for ourselves. We must, first of all, have the Cross as our trust, before it can become our pattern and our law. We must first say, 'Lord! not my feet only, but also my hands and my head,' and then, in the measure in which we ourselves have received the cleansing benediction, we shall be impelled and able to lay our gentle hands on foulness and leprosy; and to say to all the impure, 'Jesus Christ, who hath cleansed *me*, makes *thee* clean.'

THE DISMISSAL OF JUDAS

'... Then said Jesus unto Judas, That thou doest, do quickly.'—JOHN XIII. 27.

WHEN our Lord gave the morsel, dipped in the dish, to Judas, only John knew the significance of the act. But

if we supplement the narrative here with that given by Matthew, we shall find that, accompanying the gift of the sop, was a brief dialogue in which the betrayer, with unabashed front, hypocritically said, 'Lord! Is it I?' and heard the solemn, sad answer, 'Thou sayest!' Two things, then, appealed to him at the moment: one, the conviction that he was discovered; the other, the wonderful assurance that he was still loved, for the gift of the morsel was a token of friendliness. He shut his heart against them both; and as he shut his heart against Christ he opened it to the devil. So 'after the sop Satan entered into him.' At that moment a soul committed suicide; and none of those that sat by, with the exception of Christ and the 'disciple whom He loved,' so much as dreamed of the tragedy going on before their eyes.

I know not that there are anywhere words more weighty and wonderful than those of our text. And I desire to try if I can at all make you feel as I feel, their solemn signification and force. 'That thou doest, do quickly.'

I. I hear in them, first, the voice of despairing love abandoning the conflict.

If I have rightly construed the meaning of the incident, this is the plain meaning of it. And you will observe that the Revised Version, more accurately and closely rendering the words of our text, begins with a '*Therefore.*' 'Therefore said Jesus unto him,' because the die was cast; because the will of Judas had conclusively welcomed Satan, and conclusively rejected Christ; therefore, knowing that remonstrance was vain, knowing that the deed was, in effect, done, Jesus Christ, that Incarnate Charity which 'believeth all things, and hopeth all things.' abandoned the man to

himself, and said, 'There, then, if thou wilt thou must. I have done all I can; my last arrow is shot, and it has missed the target. That thou doest, do quickly.'

There is a world of solemn meaning in that one little word 'doest.' It teaches us the old lesson, which sense is so apt to forget, that the true actor in man's deeds is 'the hidden man of the heart,' and that when it has acted, it matters comparatively little whether the mere tool and instrument of the hands or of the other organs have carried out the behest. The thing is done before it is done when the man has resolved, with a fixed will, to do it. The betrayal was as good as in process, though no step beyond the introductory ones, which could easily have been cancelled, had yet been accomplished. Because there was a fixed purpose which could not be altered by anything now, therefore Jesus Christ regards the act as completed. It is what we think in our hearts that we are; and our fixed determinations, our inclinations of will, are far more truly our doings than the mere consequences of these, embodied in actuality. It is but a poor estimate of a man that judges him by the test of what he has done. What he has wanted to do is the true man; what he has attempted to do. 'It was well that it was in thine heart!' saith God to the king who thought of building the Temple which he was never allowed to rear. 'It is ill that is in thine heart,' says He by whom actions are weighed, to the sinner in purpose, though his clean hands lie idly in his lap. These hidden movements of desire and will that never come to the surface are our true selves. Look after them, and the deeds will take care of themselves. Serpent's eggs have serpents in them. And he that has determined upon a sin has done the sin, whether his hands have been put to it or no.

But, then, turn for a moment to the other thought that is suggested here—that solemn picture of a soul left to do as it will, because divine love has no other restraints which it can impose, and is bankrupt of motives that it can adduce to prevent it from its madness. Now I do not believe, for my part, that any man in this world is so all-round ‘sold unto sin’ as that the seeking love of God gives him up as irreclaimable. I do not believe that there are any people concerning whom it is true that it is impossible for the grace of God to find some chink and cranny in their souls through which it can enter and change them. There are no hopeless cases as long as men are here. But, then, though there may not be so, in regard to the whole sweep of the man’s nature, yet every one of us, over and over again, has known what it is to come exactly into that position in regard to some single evil or other, concerning which we have so set our teeth and planted our feet at such an angle of resistance as that God gives up dealing with us and leaves us, as He did with Balaam when He opposed his covetous inclinations to all the remonstrances of Heaven. God said at last to him ‘Go!’ because it was the best way to teach him what a fool he had been in wanting to go. Thus, when we determine to set ourselves against the pleadings and the beseechings of divine love, the truest kindness is to fling the reins upon our necks, and let us gallop ourselves into a sweat and weariness, and then we shall be more amenable to the touch of the rein thereafter.

Are there any people whom God is teaching obedience to His light touch, by letting them run their course after some one specific sin? Perhaps there are. At all events, let us remember that that position of being allowed to

do as we like is one to which we all tend, in the measure in which we indulge our inclinations, and shut our hearts against God's pleadings. There is such a thing as a conscience seared as with a hot iron. They used to say that there were witches' marks on the body, places where, if you stuck a pin in, there was no feeling. Men cover themselves all over with marks of that sort, which are not sensitive even to the prick of a divine remonstrance, rebuke, or retribution. They 'wipe their mouths and say I have done no harm.' You can tie up the clapper of the bell that swings on the black rock, on which, if you drift, you go to pieces. You can silence the Voice by the simple process of neglecting it. Judas set his teeth against two things, the solemn conviction that Jesus Christ knew his sin, and the saving assurance that Jesus Christ loved him still. And whosoever resists either of these two is getting perilously near to the point where, not in petulance but in pity, God will say, 'Very well, I have called and ye have refused. Now go, and do what you want to do, and see how you like it when it is done. What thou doest, do quickly.' Do you remember the other word, 'If *'twere* done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly'? But since consequences last when deeds are past, perhaps you had better halt before you determine to do them.

II. Now, secondly, I hear in these words the voice of strangely blended majesty and humiliation.

'What thou doest, do!' Judas thought he had got possession of Christ's person, and was His master in a very real sense. When lo! all at once the victim assumes the position of the Lord and commands, showing the traitor that instead of thwarting and counterworking, he was but carrying out the designs

of his fancied victim; and that he was an instrument in Christ's hands for the execution of His will. And these two thoughts, how, in effect, all antagonism, all malicious hatred, all violent opposition of every sort but work in with Christ's purpose, and carry out His intention; and how, at the moments of deepest apparent degradation, He towers, in manifest Majesty and Masterhood, seem to me to be plainly taught in the word before us.

He uses his foes for the furtherance of His purpose. That has been the history of the world ever since. 'The floods, O Lord, have lifted up their voice.' And what have they done? Smashing against the breakwater, they but consolidate its mighty blocks, and prove that 'the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters.' It has been so in the past, it is so to-day; it will be so till the end. Every Judas is unconsciously the servant of Him whom he seeks to betray; and finds out to his bewilderment that what he meant for a death-blow is fulfilling the very purpose and will of the Lord against whom he has turned.

Again, the combination here, in such remarkable juxtaposition, of the two things, a willing submission to the utmost extremity of shame, which the treasonous heart can froth out in its malice and, at the same time, a rising up in conscious majesty and lordship, are suggested to us by the words before us. That combination of utter lowliness and transcendent loftiness runs through the whole life and history of our Lord. Did you ever think how strong an argument that strange combination, brought out so inartificially throughout the whole of the Gospels, is for their historical veracity? Suppose the problem had been given to poets

to create and to set in a series of appropriate scenes a character with these two opposites stamped equally upon it, neither of them impinging upon the domain of the other—viz., utter humility and humiliation in circumstance, and majestic sovereignty and elevation above all circumstances—do you think that any of them could have solved the problem, though Æschylus and Shakespeare had been amongst them, as these four men that wrote these four little tracts that we call Gospels have done? How comes it that this most difficult of literary problems has been so triumphantly solved by these men? I think there is only one answer, 'Because they were reporters, and imagined nothing, but observed everything, and repeated what had happened.' He reconciled these opposites who was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and yet the Eternal Son of the Father; and the Gospels have solved the problem only because they are simple records of its solution by Him.

Wherever in His history there is some trait of lowliness there is by the side of it a flash of majesty. Wherever in His history there is some gleaming out from the veil of flesh of the hidden glory of divinity, there is immediately some drawing of the veil across the glory. And the two things do not contradict nor confuse, but we stand before that double picture of a Christ betrayed and of a Christ commanding His betrayer, and using his treason, and we say, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'

III. Again, I hear the voice of instinctive human weakness.

'That thou doest, do quickly.' It may be doubtful, and some of you perhaps may not be disposed to follow me in my remark, but to my ear that sounds just like

the utterance of that instinctive dislike of suspense and of the long hanging over us of the sword by a hair, which we all know so well. Better to suffer than to wait for suffering. The loudest thunder-crash is not so awe-inspiring as the dread silence of nature when the sky is black before the peal rolls through the clouds. Many a martyr has prayed for a swift ending of his troubles. Many a sorrowing heart, that has been sitting cowering under the anticipation of coming evils, has wished that the string could be pulled, as it were, and they could all come down in one cold flood, and be done with, rather than trickle drop by drop. They tell us that the bravest soldiers dislike the five minutes when they stand in rank before the first shot is fired. And with all reverence I venture to think that He who knew all our weaknesses in so far as weakness was not sin, is here letting us see how He, too, desired that the evil which was coming might come quickly, and that the painful tension of expectation might be as brief as possible. That may be doubtful; I do not dwell upon it, but I suggest it for your consideration.

IV. And then I pass on to the last of the tones that I hear in these utterances—the voice of the willing Sacrifice for the sins of the world.

‘That thou doest, do quickly.’ There is nothing more obvious throughout the whole of the latter portion of the Gospel narrative than the way in which, increasingly towards its close, Jesus seemed to hasten to the Cross. You remember His own sayings: ‘I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished. I am come to cast fire on the earth; would it were already kindled!’ You remember with what a strange air—I was going to use an

inappropriate word, and say, of alacrity; but, at all events, of fixed resolve—He journeyed from Galilee, in that last solemn march to Jerusalem, and how the disciples followed, astonished at the unwonted look of decision and absorption that was printed upon His countenance. If we consider His doings in that last week in Jerusalem, how he courted publicity, how He avoided no encounter with His official enemies, how He sharpened His tones, not exactly so as to provoke, but certainly so as by no means to conciliate, we shall see, I think, in it all, His consciousness that the hour had come, and His absolute readiness and willingness to be offered for the world's sin. He stretches out His hands, as it were, to draw the Cross nearer to Himself, not with any share in the weakness of a fanatical aspiration after martyrdom, but under a far deeper and more wonderful impulse.

Why was Christ so willing, so eager, if I may use the word, that His death should be accomplished? Two reasons, which at the bottom are one, answer the question. He thus hastened to His Cross because He would obey the Father's will, and because He loved the whole world—you and me and all our fellows. We were each in His heart. It was because He wanted to save thee that He said to Judas, 'Do it quickly, that the world's salvation and that man's salvation may be accomplished.' These were the cords that bound Him to the altar. Let us never forget that Judas with his treachery, and rulers with their hostility, and Pilate with his authority, and the soldiers with their nails, and centurions with their lances, and the grim figure of Death itself with its shaft, would have been all equally powerless against Christ if it had not been his loving will to die on the Cross for each of us.

Therefore, brethren, as we hear this voice, let us discern in it the tones which warn us of the danger of yielding to inclination and stifling His rebukes, till He abandons us for the moment in despair; let us hear in it the pathetic voice of a Brother, who knows all our weaknesses and has felt our emotions; let us hear the voice of Sovereign Authority which uses its enemies for its purposes, and is never loftier than when it is most lowly, whose Cross is His throne of glory, whose exaltation is His deepest humiliation, and let us hear a love which, discerning each of us through all the ages and the crowds, went willingly to the Cross because He willed that He should be our Saviour.

And seeing that time is short, and the future precarious, and delay may darken into loss and rejection, let us take these words as spoken to us in another sense, and hear in them the warning that 'to-day, if we will hear His voice, we harden not our hearts,' and when He says to us, in regard to repentance and faith, and Christian consecration and service, 'That thou doest, do quickly,' let us answer, 'I made haste and delayed not, but made haste to keep Thy commandments.'

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

'Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.'—JOHN xiii. 31, 32.

THERE is something very weird and awful in the brief note of time with which the Evangelist sends Judas on his dark errand. 'He . . . went immediately out, and it was night.' Into the darkness that dark soul went. That hour was 'the power of darkness,' the very key-

stone of the black arch of man's sin, and some shadow of it fell upon the soul of Christ Himself.

In immediate connection with the departure of the traitor comes this singular burst of triumph in our text. The Evangelist emphasises the connection by that: '*Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said.*' There is a wonderful touch of truth and naturalness in that connection. The traitor was gone. His presence had been a restraint; and now that that 'spot in their feast of charity' had disappeared, the Master felt at ease; and like some stream, out of the bed of which a black rock has been taken, His words flow more freely. How intensely real and human the narrative becomes when we see that Christ, too, felt the oppression of an uncongenial presence, and was relieved and glad at its removal! The departure of the traitor evoked these words of triumph in another way, too. At his going away, we may say, the match was lit that was to be applied to the train. He had gone out on his dark errand, and that brought the Cross within measurable distance of our Lord. Out of a new sense of its nearness He speaks here. So the note of time not only explains to us why our Lord spoke, but puts us on the right track for understanding His words, and makes any other interpretation of them than one impossible. What Judas went to do was the beginning of Christ's glorifying. We have here, then, a triple glorification—the Son of Man glorified in His Cross; God glorified in the Son of Man; and the Son of Man glorified in God. Let us look at these three thoughts for a few moments now.

I. First, we have here the Son of Man glorified in His Cross.

The words are a paradox. Strange, that at such a

moment, when there rose up before Christ all the vision of the shame and the suffering, the pain and the death, and the mysterious sense of abandonment, which was worse than them all, He should seem to stretch out His hands to bring the Cross nearer to Himself, and that His soul should fill with triumph!

There is a double aspect under which our Lord regarded His sufferings. On the one hand we mark in Him an unmistakable shrinking from the Cross, the innocent shrinking of His manhood expressed in such words as 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished'; and in such incidents as the agony in Gethsemane. And yet, side by side with that, not overcome by it, but not overcoming it, there is the opposite feeling, the reaching out almost with eagerness to bring the Cross nearer to Himself. These two lie close by each other in His heart. Like the pellucid waters of the Rhine and the turbid stream of the Moselle, that flow side by side over a long space, neither of them blending discernibly with the other, so the shrinking and the desire were contemporaneous in Christ's mind. Here we have the triumphant anticipation rising to the surface, and conquering for a time the shrinking.

Why did Christ think of His Cross as a glorifying? The New Testament generally represents it as the very lowest point of His degradation; John's Gospel always represents it as the very highest point of His glory. And the two things are both true; just as the zenith of our sky is the nadir of the sky for those on the other side of the world. The same fact which in one aspect sounds the very lowest depth of Christ's humiliation, in another aspect is the very highest culminating point of His glory.

How did the Cross glorify Christ? In two ways. It was the revelation of His heart; it was the throne of His sovereign power.

It was the revelation of His heart. All his life long He had been trying to tell the world how much He loved it. His love had been, as it were, filtered by drops through His words, through His deeds, through His whole demeanour and bearing; but in His death it comes in a flood, and pours itself upon the world. All His life long he had been revealing His heart, through the narrow rifts of His deeds, like some slender lancet windows; but in His death all the barriers are thrown down, and the brightness blazes out upon men. All through His life He had been trying to communicate His love to the world, and the fragrance came from the box of ointment exceeding precious, but when the box was broken the house was filled with the odour.

For Him to be known was to be glorified. So pure and perfect was He, that revelation of His character and glorification of Himself were one and the same thing. Because His Cross reveals to the world for all time, and for eternity, too, a love which shrinks from no sacrifice, a love which is capable of the most entire abandonment, a love which is diffused over the whole surface of humanity and through all the ages, a love which comes laden with the richest and the highest gifts, even the turning of selfish and sinful hearts into its own pure and perfect likeness, therefore does He say, in contemplation of that Cross which was to reveal Him for what He was to the world, and to bring His love to every one of us, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'

We can fancy a mother, for instance, in the anticipation of shame, and ignominy, and suffering, and sorrow,

and death which she encounters for the sake of some prodigal child, forgetting all the ignominy, and the shame, and the suffering, and the sorrow, and the death, because all these are absorbed in the one thought: 'If I bear them, my poor, wandering, rebellious child will know at last how much I loved him.' So Christ yearns to impart the knowledge of Himself to us, because by that knowledge we may be won to His love and service; and hence when He looks forward to the agony, and contumely, and sorrow of the close, every other thought is swallowed up in this one: 'They will be the means by which the whole world will find out how deep my heart of love to it was.' Therefore does He triumph and say, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'

Still further, He regards His Cross as the means of His glorifying, because it is His throne of saving power. The paradoxical words of our text rest upon His profound conviction that in His death He was about to put forth a mightier and diviner power than ever He had manifested in His life. They are the same in effect and in tone as the great words: 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Now I want you to ask yourselves one question: In what sense is Christ's Cross Christ's glorifying, unless His Cross bears an altogether different relation to His life from what the death of a great teacher or benefactor ordinarily bears to his? It is impossible that Christ could have spoken such words as these of my text if He had simply thought of His death as a Plato or a John Howard might have thought of his, as being the close of his activity for the welfare of his fellows. Unless Christ's death has in it some substantive value, unless it is something more than the mere termination of His work for the

world, I see not how the words before us can be interpreted. If His death is His glorifying, it must be because in that death something is done which was not completed by the life, however fair; by the words, however wise and tender; by the works of power, however restorative and healing. Here is something more than these present. What more? This more, that His Cross is the 'propitiation for the sins of the whole world.' He is glorified therein, not as a Socrates might be glorified by his calm and noble death; not because nothing in His life became Him better than the leaving of it; not because the page that tells the story of His passion is turned to by us as the tenderest and most sacred in the world's records; but because in that death He wrestled with and overcame our foes, and because, like the Jewish hero of old, dying, He pulled down the house which our tyrants had built, and overwhelmed them in its ruins. 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'

And so, brethren, there blend, in that last act of our Lord's—for His death was His act—in strange fashion, the two contradictory ideas of glory and shame; like some sky, all full of dark thunderclouds, and yet between them the brightest blue and the blazing sunshine. In the Cross, Death crowns Him the Prince of Life, and His Cross is His throne. All His life long He was the Light of the World, but the very noontide hour of His glory was that hour when the shadow of eclipse lay over all the land, and He hung on the Cross dying in the dark. At His 'eventide it was light.' 'He endured the Cross, despising the shame'; and lo! the shame flashed up into the very brightness of glory, and the ignominy and the suffering became the jewels of His crown. 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'

II. Now let us turn for a moment to the second of the threefold glorifications that are set forth here: God glorified in the Son of Man.

The mystery deepens as we advance. That God should be glorified in a man is not strange, but that He should be so glorified in the eminent and special fashion which Jesus contemplates here, is strange; and stranger still when we think that the act in which He was to be glorified was the death of an innocent Man. If God, in any special and eminent manner, is glorified in the Cross of Jesus Christ, that implies, as it seems to me, two things at all events—many more which I have not time to touch upon, but two things very plainly. One is that 'God was in Christ,' in some singular and eminent manner. If all His life was a continual manifestation of the divine character, if Christ's words were the divine wisdom, if Christ's compassion was the divine pity, if Christ's lowliness was the divine gentleness, if His whole human life and nature were the brightest and clearest manifestation to the world of what God is, we can understand that the Cross was the highest point of the revelation of the divine nature to the world, and so was the glorifying of God in Him. But if we take any lower view of the relation between God and Christ, I know not how we can acquit these words of our Master of the charge of being a world too wide for the facts of the case.

The words involve, as it seems to me, not only that idea of a close, unique union and indwelling of God in Christ, but they involve also this other: that these sufferings bore no relation to the deserts of the person who endured them. If Christ, with His pure and perfect character—the innocency and nobleness of which all that read the Gospels admit—if Christ

suffered so; if the highest virtue that was ever seen in this world brought no better wages than shame and spitting and the Cross; if Christ's life and Christ's death are simply a typical example of the world's treatment of its greatest benefactors; then, if they have any bearing at all on the character of God, they cast a shadow rather than a light upon the divine government, and become not the least formidable of the difficulties and knots that will have to be untied hereafter before it shall be clear that God did everything well. But if we can say, 'He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows'; if we can say, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself'; if we can say, that His death was the death of Him whom God had appointed to live and die for us, and 'to bear our sins in His own body on the tree,' then, though deep mysteries come with the thought, still we can see that, in a very unique manner, God is glorified and exalted in His death.

For if the dying Christ be the Son of God dying for us, then the Cross glorifies God, because it teaches us that the glory of the divine character is the divine love. Of wisdom, or of power, or of any of the more 'majestic' attributes of the divine nature, that weak Man, hanging dying on the Cross, was a strange embodiment; but if the very heart of the divine brightness be the pure white fire of love; if there be nothing diviner in God than His giving of Himself to His creatures; if the highest glory of the divine nature be to pity and to bestow, then the Cross upon which Christ died towers above all other revelations as the most awful, the most sacred, the most tender, the most complete, the most heart-touching, the most soul-subduing manifestation of the divine nature; and stars and

worlds, and angels and mighty creatures, and things in the heights and things in the depths, to each of which have been entrusted some broken syllables of the divine character to make known to the world, dwindle and fade before the brightness, the lambent, gentle brightness that beams out from the Cross of Christ, which proclaims—God is love, is pity, is pardon.

And is it not so—is it not so? Is not the thought that has flowed from Christ's Cross through Christendom of what our Father in Heaven is, the highest and the most blessed that the world has ever had? Has it not scattered doubts that lay like mountains of ice upon man's heart? Has it not swept the heavens clear of clouds that wrapped it in darkness? Has it not delivered men from the dreams of gods angry, gods capricious, gods vengeful, gods indifferent, gods simply mighty and vast and awful and unspeakable? Has it not taught us that love is God, and God is love; and so brought to the whole world the true Gospel, the Gospel of the grace of God? In that Cross the Father is glorified.

III. Now, lastly, we have here the Son of Man glorified in the Father.

The mysteries and the paradoxes seem to deepen as we advance. 'If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.' Do these words sound to you as if they expressed no more than the confidence of a good man, who, when he was dying, believed that he would be accepted of a loving Father, and would be at rest from his sufferings? To me they seem to say infinitely more than that. 'He shall also glorify Him in Himself.' Mark that 'in Himself.' That is the obvious antithesis to what has been spoken about in the previous clause

a glorifying which consisted in a manifestation to the external universe, whereas this is a glorifying within the depths of the divine nature. And the best commentary upon it is our Lord's own words: 'Father! glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.' We get a glimpse, as it were, into the very centre of the brightness of God; and there, walking in that beneficent furnace, we see 'One like unto the Son of Man.' Christ anticipates that, in some profound and unspeakable sense, He shall, as it were, be caught up into the divinity, and shall dwell, as indeed He did dwell from the beginning, 'in the bosom of the Father.' 'He shall glorify Him in Himself.'

But then mark, still further, that this reception into the bosom of the Father is given to the Son of Man. That is to say, the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Brother of us all, 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' the very Person that walked upon earth and dwelt amongst us is taken up into the heart of God, and in His manhood enters into that same glory, which, from the beginning, the Eternal Word had with God.

And still further, not only have we here set forth, in most wondrous language, the reception and incorporation, if we may use such words, into the very centre of divinity, as granted to the Son of Man, but we have that glorifying set forth as commencing immediately upon the completion of God's glorifying by Christ upon the Cross. 'He shall straightway glorify Him.' At the instant then, that He said, 'It is finished,' and all that the Cross could do to glorify God was done, at that instant there began, with not a pin-point of interval between them, God's glorifying of the Son in Himself. It began in that Paradise into which we know that upon that day He entered. It was manifested to the

world when He 'raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory.' It reached a still higher point when 'they brought Him near unto the Ancient of Days,' and ascending up on high, a dominion and a throne and a glory were given to Him which last now, whilst the Son of Man sits in the heavens on the throne of His glory, wielding the attributes of divinity, and administering the laws of the universe and the mysteries of providence. It shall rise to its highest manifestation before an assembled world, when He 'shall come in His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations.'

This then, was the vision that lay before the Christ in that upper room, the vision of Himself glorified in His extreme shame, because His Cross manifested His love and His saving power; of God glorified in Him above all other of His acts of manifestation when He died on the Cross, and revealed the very heart of God; and of Himself glorified in the Father when, exalted high above all creatures, He sitteth upon the Father's throne and rules the Father's realm.

And yet from that high, and, to us, inaccessible and all but inconceivable summit of His elevation, He looks down ready to bless each poor creature here, toiling and moiling amidst sufferings, and meannesses, and commonplaces, and monotony, if we will only put our trust in Him, and love Him, and see the brightness of the Father's face in Him. He cares for us all; and if we will but take Him as our Saviour, His all-prevalent prayer, presented within the veil for us, will certainly be fulfilled at last: 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.'

CANNOT AND CAN

'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you.'—
JOHN xiii. 33.

THE preceding context shows how large and black the Cross loomed before Jesus now, and how radiant the glory beyond shone out to Him. But it was only for a moment that either of these two absorbed His thoughts; and with wonderful self-forgetfulness and self-command, He turned away at once from the consideration of how the near future was to affect Him, to the thought of how it was to affect the handful of helpless disciples who had to be left alone. Impending separation breaks up the fountains of the heart, and we all know the instinct that desires to crowd all the often hidden love into some one last token. So here our Lord addresses His disciples by a name that is never used except this once, 'little children,' a fond diminutive that not only reveals an unusual depth of tender emotion, but also breathes a pitying sense of their defencelessness when they are to be left alone. So might a dying mother look at her little ones.

But the words that follow, at first sight, are dark with the sense of a final and complete separation 'Ye shall seek Me'—and not only so, but He seems to put back His humble friends into the same place as had been occupied by His bitter foes—'as I said to the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you.' There was something that prevented both classes alike from keeping Him company; and He had to walk His path both into the darkness and into the glory, alone.

The words apply in their fullness only to the parenthesis of time whilst He lay in the grave, and the disciples despairingly thought that all was ended. It was a brief period: it was a revolutionary moment; and though it was soon to end, they needed to be guarded against it. But though the words do not apply to the permanent relation between the glorified Christ and us, His disciples, yet partly by similarity, and still more by contrast, they do suggest great Christian blessedness and imperative Christian duties. These gather themselves mainly round two contrasts, a transitory 'cannot' soon to be changed into a permanent 'can'; and a momentary seeking, soon to be converted into a blessed seeking which finds. I now deal only with the former.

We have here a transitory 'cannot' soon to be changed into a permanent 'can.'

'Whither I go ye cannot come.' Does not one hear a tone of personal sorrow in that saying? Jesus had always hungered for understanding and sympathetic companions, and one of His lifelong sorrows had been His utter loneliness; but He had never, in all the time that He had been with them, so put out His hand, feeling for some warm clasp of a human hand to help Him in His struggle, as He did during the hours terminating with Gethsemane. And perhaps we may venture to say that we hear in this utterance an expression of Christ's sorrow for Himself that He had to tread the dark way, and to pass into the brightness beyond, all alone. He yearned for the impossible human companionship, as well as sorrowed for the imperfections which made it impossible.

Why was it that they could not 'follow Him now'? The answer to that question is found in the considera-

tion of whither it was that He went. When that bright Shekinah-cloud at the Ascension received Him into its radiant folds, it showed why they could not follow Him, because it revealed that He went unto the Father, when He left the world. So we are brought face to face with the old, solemn thought that character makes capacity for heaven. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?' asked the Psalmist; and a prophet put the question in a still sharper form, and by the very form of the question suggested a negative answer—'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire; who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' Who can pass into that Presence, and stand near God, without being, like the maiden in the old legend, shrivelled into ashes by the contact of the celestial fire? 'Holiness' is that 'without which no man shall see the Lord.' And we, all of us, in the depths of our own hearts, if we rightly understand the voices that ever echo there, must feel that the condition which is, obviously and without any need for arguing it, required for abiding with God, and so going into the glory where Christ is, is a condition which none of us can fulfil. In that respect the imperfect and immature friends, the little children, the babes who loved and yet knew not Him whom they loved, and the scowling enemies, were at one. For they had all of them the one human heart, and in that heart the deep-lying alienation and contrariety to God. Therefore Christ trod the winepress alone, and alone 'ascended up where He was before.'

But let us remember that this 'cannot' was only a transitory cannot. For we must underscore very deeply that word in my text '*so now* I say to you,'

and a moment afterwards, when one of the Apostles puts the question: 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' the answer is: 'Thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.' The text, too, is succeeded immediately by the wonderful parting consolations and counsels spoken to the disciples, through all of which there gleams the promise that they will be with Him where He is, and behold His glory. Set side by side with these sad words of our Lord in the text, by which He unloosed their clasping hands from Him, and turned His face to His solitary path, the triumphant language in which habitually the rest of the New Testament speaks of the Christian man's relation to Christ. Think of that great passage: 'Ye are come unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, . . . and to God the Judge of all, . . . and to Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant.' What has become of the impossibility? Vanished. Where is the 'cannot'? Turned into a blessed 'can.' And so Apostles have no scruple in saying, 'Our citizenship is in Heaven,' nor in saying, 'We sit together with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' The path that was blocked is open. The impossibility that towered up like a great black wall has melted away; and the path into the Holiest of all is made patent by the blood of Christ. For in that death there lies the power that sweeps away all the impediments of man's sin, and in that life of the risen, glorified, indwelling Christ there lies the power which cleanses the inmost heart from 'all filthiness of flesh and spirit,' and makes it possible for our mortal feet to walk on the immortal path, and for us, with all our unworthiness, with all our shrinking, to stand in His presence and not be ashamed or consumed. 'Ye cannot come' was true for a few

days. 'Ye can come' is true for ever; and for all Christian men.

But let us not forget that the one attitude of heart and mind, by which a poor, sinful man, who dare not draw near to God, receives into himself the merit and power of the death, and the indwelling power of the life, of Jesus Christ, is personal faith in Jesus Christ. To trust Him is to come to Him, and it is represented in Scripture as conferring an instantaneous fitness for access to God. People pray sometimes that they may be made 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' and the prayer is, in a sense, wise and true. But they too often forget that the Apostle says, in the original connection of the words which they so quote: 'He *hath* translated us from the tyranny of the darkness, and *hath* made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.' That is to say, whenever a poor soul, compassed and laden with its infirmity and sin, turns itself to that Lord whose Cross conquers sin, and whose blood infused into our veins—the Spirit of whose life granted to us—gives us to partake of His own righteousness, that moment that soul can tread the path that brings into the presence of God, and 'has access with confidence by the faith of Him.' So, brethren, seeing that thus the incapacity may all be swept away, and that instead of a 'cannot,' which relegates us to darkness, we may receive a 'can' which leads us into the light, let us see to it that this communion, which is possible for all Christian men, is real in our cases, and that we use the access which is given to us, and dwell for ever in, and with, the Lord.

I have said that the act of faith, by associating a man with Jesus Christ in the power of His death and of His

life, makes any who exercise it capable of passing into the presence of God. But I would remind you, too, that to make us more fit for more full and habitual communion is the very purpose for which all the discipline of our earthly life, its sorrows and its joys, its tasks and its repose, is exercised upon us—‘He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.’ Surely if we habitually took that point of view in reference to our work, in reference to our joys, in reference to our trials, everything would be different. We are being prepared with sedulous love, with patient reiteration of ‘line upon line, precept upon precept,’ with singularly varied methods but a uniform purpose, by all that meets us in life, to be more capable of treading the eternal path into the eternal light. Is that how we daily think of our own circumstances? Do we bring that great thought to bear upon all that we, sometimes faithlessly, call mysterious or murmuringly think of—if we dare not speak our thought—as being cruel and hard? What does it matter if some precious things be lifted off our shoulders, and out of our hearts, if their being taken away makes it more possible for us to tread with a lighter step the path of peace? What matters it though many things that we would fain keep are withdrawn from us, if by the withdrawal we are sent a little further forward on the road that leads to God? As George Herbert says, sorrows and joys are like battledores that drive a shuttlecock, and they may all ‘toss us to His breast.’ In faith, however infantile it may be, there is an undeveloped capacity, a germ of fitness, for dwelling with God. But that capacity is meant to be increased, and the little children are meant to be helped to grow up into full-grown men, ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,’ by all

that comes here to them on earth. Do you not think we should understand life better, do you not think it would all be flashed up into new radiance, do you not think we should more seldom stand bewildered at what we choose to call the inscrutable dispensations of Providence, if this were the point of view from which we looked at them all—that they were fitting us for perpetual abiding with our Father God?

Nor let us forget that there was a transient ‘cannot’ of another sort. For ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.’ So, as life is changed when we think of it as helping us toward Him, death is changed when we think of it as being, if I may so say, the usher in attendance on the Presence-chamber, who draws back the thin curtain that separates us from the throne, and takes us by the hands and leads us into the Presence. Surely if we habitually thought thus of that otherwise grim chamberlain, we should be willing to put our hands into His, as a little child will, when straying, into the hands of a stranger who says, ‘Come with me and I will take you home to your father.’ ‘As I said unto the Jews . . . so now I say to you, whither I go, ye cannot come.’

Let us press on you and on myself the one thought that comes out of all that I have been saying, the blessed possibility, which, because it is a possibility, is an obligation, to use far more than most of us do, the right of access to the King who is our Father. There are nobles and corporate bodies, who regard it as one of their chief distinctions that they have always the right of *entrée* to the court of the sovereign. Every Christian man has that. And in old days, when a baron did not show himself at court, suspicion naturally arose, and he was in danger of being thought disaffected^d if not

traitorous. Ah! if you and I were judged according to that law, what would become of us? We can go when we like. How seldom we do go! We can live in the heavens whilst our work lies down here. We prefer the low earth to the lofty sky. 'We are come'—ideally, and in the depths of our nature, our affinities are there—'unto God, the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant.' Are we come? Are we day by day, in all the pettiness of our ordinary lives, when compassed by hard duties, weighed upon by sore distress—still keeping our hearts in heaven, and our feet familiar with the path that leads us to God? 'Set your affection on things above, where Jesus is, sitting at the right hand of God.' For there is no 'cannot' for His servants in regard to their access to any place where He is.

SEEKING JESUS

'... Ye shall seek Me.'—JOHN xiii. 33.

IN the former sermon on this verse I pointed out that it, in its fullness, applies only to the brief period between the crucifixion and the resurrection, but that, partly by contrast and partly by analogy, it suggests permanent relations between Christ and His disciples. These relations were mainly—as I pointed out then—two: there was that one expressed by the subsequent words of the verse, 'Whither I go, ye cannot come'—a brief 'cannot,' soon to be changed into a permanent 'can'; and there was a second, a brief, sad, and vain seeking, soon to be changed into a seeking which finds. It is to the latter that I wish to turn now.

'Ye shall seek Me' fell, like the clods on a coffin-lid,

with a hollow sound on the hearts of the Apostles. It comes to us as a permission and a command and a promise. I do not dwell on that sad seeking, which was so brief but so bitter. We all know what it is to put out an empty hand into the darkness and the void, and to grope for a touch which we know, whilst we grope, that we shall not find. And these poor, helpless disciples, by their forlorn sense of separation, by their yearning that brought no satisfaction, by their very listless despair, were saying, during these hours of agony into which an eternity of pain was condensed, 'Oh! that He were beside us again!'

That sad seeking ended when He came to them, and 'then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.' But another kind of seeking began, when 'the cloud received Him out of their sight'; as joyful as the other was laden with sorrow, as sure to find the object of its quest as the other was certain to be disappointed. What He said in the darkness to them, He says in the light to us: What 'I say unto you I say unto all,' *Seek!* So now we have to deal with that joyful search which is sure of finding its object, and is only a little, if at all, less blessed than the finding itself.

I. Every Christian is, by his very name, a seeker after Christ.

There are two kinds of seeking, one like that of a bird whose young have been stolen away, which flutters here and there, because it knows not where that is which it seeks; another, like the flight of the same bird, when the migrating instinct rises in its little breast, and straight as an arrow it goes, not because it knows not its goal, but because it knows it, yonder where the sun is warm and the sky is blue, and winter is left behind in the cold north. 'Ye shall seek Me' is the

word of promise, which changes the vain search that is ignorant of where the object of its quest is, into a blessed going out of the heart towards that which it knows to be the home of its homelessness. Thus the text brings out the very central blessedness and peculiarity of the Christian life, that it has no uncertainty in its aims, and that, instead of seeking for things which may or may not be found, or if found may or may not prove to be what we dreamt them to be, it seeks for a Person whom it knows where to find, and of whom it knows that all its desires will be met in Him. We have, then, on the one side the multifarious, divergent searchings of man; and on the other side the one quest in which all these others are gathered up, and translated into blessedness—the seeking after Jesus Christ.

Men know that they need, if I may so put it, four things: truth for the understanding, love round which the heart may coil, authority for the will which may direct and restrain, and energy for the practical life. But, apart from the quest after Christ, men for the most part seek these necessary goods in divers objects, and fragmentarily look for the completion of their desires. But fragments will never satisfy a man's soul, and they who have to go to one place for truth, and to another for love, and to another for authority, and to another for energy, are wofully likely never to find what they search for. They are seeking in the manifold what can be found only in the One. It is as if some vessel, full of precious stones, were thrown down before men, and whilst they are racing after the diamonds, they lose the emeralds and the sapphires. But the wise concentrate their seekings on the 'one Pearl of great price,' in whom is truth for the brain, love for the heart, authority for the will, power for

the life, and all summed in that which is more blessed than all, the Person of the Brother who died for us, the Christ who lives to fill our hearts for ever. One sun dims all the stars; and the 'one entire and perfect Chrysolite' beggars and reduces to fragments 'all the precious things that thou canst desire.'

To seek Him is the very hall-mark of a Christian, and that seeking comes to be an earnest desire and effort after more conscious communion with Him, and a more entire possession of His imparted life which is righteousness and peace and joy and power. According to the Rabbis, the manna tasted to each man what each man most desired. The manifoldness of the one Christ is far more manifold than the manifoldness of the multiplicity of fragmentary and partial aims which foolish men perceive.

The ways of seeking are very plain. First of all, we seek if, and in proportion as, we make the effort to occupy our thoughts and minds, not with theological dogmas, but with the living Christ Himself. Ah! brethren, it is hard to do, and I daresay a great many of you are thinking that it is far harder for you, in the distractions and rush and conflict of business and daily life, than it is for people like me, whom you imagine as sitting in a study, with nothing to distract us. I do not know about that; I fancy it is about equally hard for us all; but it is possible. I have been in Alpine villages where, at the end of every squalid alley, there towered up a great, pure, silent, white peak. That is what our lives may be; however noisome, crowded, petty the little lane in which we live, the Alp is at the end of it there, if we only choose to lift our eyes and look. It is possible that not only 'into the sessions of sweet silent

thought,' but into the rush and bustle of the workshop or the exchange, there may come, like 'some sweet, beguiling melody, so sweet we know not we are listening to it,' the thought that changes pettiness into greatness, that makes all things go smoothly and easily, that is a test and a charm to discover and to destroy temptation, the thought of a present Christ, the Lover of my soul, and the Helper of my life.

Again, we seek Him when, by aspiration and desire, we bring Him—as He is always brought thereby—into our hearts and into our lives. The measure of our desire is the measure of our possession. Wishing is the opening of our hearts, but, alas, often we wish and desire, and the heart opens and nothing enters. Wishes are like the tentacles of some marine organism waving about in a waste ocean, feeling for the food that they do not find. But if we open our hearts for Him, that is simultaneous with the coming of Him to us. 'Ye have not, because ye ask not.' Do not forget, dear friends, that desire, if it is genuine, will take a very concrete form and will be prayer. And it is prayer—by which I do not mean the utterance of words without desire, any more than I mean desire without the direct casting of it into the form of supplication—it is prayer that brings Christ into any, and it is prayer that will bring Him into every, life.

Nor let us forget that there is another way of seeking besides these two, of looking up to Him through, and in the midst of, all the shows and trifles of this low life, and the reaching out of our desires towards Him, as the roots of a tree beneath the soil go straight for the river. That other way is imitation and obedi-

ence. It is vain to think of Him, and it is unreal to pretend to desire Him, if we are not seeking Him by treading in the path that He has trod, and which leads to Him. Imitation and obedience—these are the steps by which we go straight through all the trivialities of life into the presence of the Lord Himself. The smallest deflection from the path that leads to Him will carry us away into doleful wastes. The least invisible cloud that steals across the sky will blot out half a hemisphere of stars; and we seek not Christ unless, thinking of Him, and desiring Him, we also walk in the path in which He has walked, and so come where He is. He Himself has said that if His servant follows Him, where He is there shall also His servant be. These things make up the seeking which ought to mark us all.

I note that—

II. The Christian seeker always finds.

I pointed out in my last sermon the strange identity of our Lord's words to His humble friends, with those which on another occasion He used to His bitter enemies. He reminds the disciples of that identity in the verse from which my text comes: 'As I said to the Jews . . . so now I say to you.' But there was one thing that He said to the Jews that He did not say to them. To the former He said, 'Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me'; and He did not say that—even for the sad hours it was not quite true—He did not say that to His followers, and He does not say it to us.

If we seek we shall find. There is no disappointment in the Christian life. Anything is possible rather than that a man should desire Christ and not have Him. That has never been the experience of any seeking

soul. And so I urge upon you what has already been suggested, that inasmuch as, by reason of His infinite longing to give truth and love and guidance and energy and His whole Self, to all of us, the amount of our possession of the power and life of Jesus Christ depends on ourselves. If you take to the fountain a tiny cup, you will only bring away a tiny cupful. If you take a great vessel you will bring it away full. As long as the woman in the old story held out her vessels to the miraculous flow of the oil, the flow continued. When she had no more vessels to take, the flow stopped. If a man holds a flagon beneath a spigot with an unsteady hand, half of the precious liquor will be spilt on the ground. Those who fulfil the conditions, of which I have already been speaking, may make quite sure that according to their faith will it be unto them. And if you, dear friend, have not in your experience the conscious presence of a Christ who is all that you need, there is no one in heaven or earth or hell to blame for it but only your own self. 'I have never said to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye My face in vain'; and when the Lord said, 'Ye shall seek Me,' He was implicitly binding Himself to meet the seeking soul, and give Himself to the desiring heart.

Remember, too, that this seeking, which is always crowned with finding, is the only search in which failure is impossible. There is only one course of life that has no disappointments. We all know how frequently we are foiled in our quests; we all know how often a prize won is a bitterer disappointment than a prize unattained. Like a jelly-fish in the water, as long as it is there its tenuous substance is lovely, expanded, tinged with delicate violets and

blues, and its long filaments float in lines of beauty. Lay it on the beach, and it is a shapeless lump, and it poisons and stings. You fish your prize out of the great ocean, and when you have it, does it disappoint, or does it fulfil, the raised expectations of the quest? There is One who does not disappoint. There is one gold mine that comes up to the prospectus. There is one spring that never runs dry. The more deep our Christian experience is, the more we shall take the rapturous exclamation of the Arabian queen to ourselves: 'The half was not told us!'

And so, lastly, I suggest that—

III. The finding impels to fresh seeking.

The object of the Christian man's quest is Jesus Christ. He is Incarnate Infinitude; and that cannot be exhausted. The seeker after Jesus Christ is the Christian soul. That soul is the incarnate possibility of indefinite expansion and approximation and assimilation; and that cannot be exhausted. And so, with a Christ who is infinite, and a seeker whose capacities may be indefinitely expanded, there can be no satiety, there can be no limit, there can be no end to the process. This wine-skin will not burst when the new wine is put into it. Rather like some elastic vessel, as you pour it will fill out and expand. Possession enlarges, and the more of Christ's fullness is poured into a human heart, the more is that heart widened out to receive a greater blessing.

Dear brethren, there is one course of life, and I believe but one, on which we may all enter with the sure confidence that in the nature of things, in the nature of Christ, and in the nature of ourselves, there is no end to growth and progress. Think of the fresh-

ness and blessedness and energy that puts into a life. To have an unattained and unattainable object, a goal to which we can never come, but to which we may ever be approximating, seems to me to be the secret of perpetual joy and of perpetual youthfulness. To say, 'forgetting the things that are behind, I reach forward unto the things that are before,' is a charm and an amulet that repels monotony and weariness, and goes with a man to the very end, and when all other aims and objects have died down into grey ashes, that flame, like the fabled lamp in Virgil's tomb, burns clear in the grave, and lights us to the eternity beyond.

For certainly, if there be neither satiety nor limit to Christian progress here, there can be no better and stronger evidence that Christian progress here is but the first 'lap' of the race, the first *stadium* of the course, and that beyond that narrow, dark line which lies across the path, it runs on, rising higher, and will run on for ever.

'On earth the broken arc ; in heaven the perfect round.'

Seek for what you are sure to find; seek for what will never disappoint you; seek for what will abide with you for ever. The very first word of Christ's recorded in Scripture is a question which He puts to us all: '*What seek ye?*' Well for us, if like the two to whom it was originally addressed, we answer, 'We are not seeking a What; we are seeking a Whom.—Master, where dwellest Thou?' And if we have that answer in our hearts, we shall receive the invitation which they received, 'Come and see,'—come and seek. 'Ye shall seek Me' is a gracious invitation, an imperative command, and a faithful promise that if we seek we shall find. 'Whoso findeth *Him* findeth life; whoso misseth

Him'—whatever else he has sought and found—
'wrongeth his own soul.'

‘AS I HAVE LOVED’

^a A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.'—JOHN xiii. 34, 35.

WISHES from dying lips are sacred. They sink deep into memories and mould faithful lives. The sense of impending separation had added an unwonted tenderness to our Lord's address, and He had designated His disciples by the fond name of 'little children.' The same sense here gives authority to His words, and moulds them into the shape of a command. The disciples had held together because He was in their midst. Will the arch stand when the keystone is struck out? Will not the spokes fall asunder when the nave of the wheel is taken away? He would guard them from the disintegrating tendencies that were sure to set in when He was gone; and He would point them to a solace for His absence, and to a kind of substitute for His presence. For to love the brethren whom they see would be, in some sense, a continuing to love the Christ whom they had ceased to see. And so, immediately after He said: 'Whither I go ye cannot come,' He goes on to say: 'Love one another as I have loved you.'

He called this a 'new commandment,' though to love one's neighbour as one's self was a familiar commonplace amongst the Jews, and had a recognised position in Rabbinical teaching. But His commandment proposed a new object of love, it set forth a new measure of love, so greatly different from all that had preceded it as to become almost a new kind of love, and

it suggested and supplied a new motive power for love. This commandment ‘could give life’ and fulfil itself. Therefore it comes to us as a ‘new commandment’—even to us—and, unlike the words which preceded it, which we were considering in former sermons, it is wholly and freshly applicable to-day as in the ages that are passed. I ask you, first, to consider—

I. The new scope of the new commandment.

‘Love one another.’ The newness of the precept is realised, if we think for a moment of the new phenomenon which obedience to it produced. When the words were spoken, the then-known civilised Western world was cleft by great, deep gulfs of separation, like the crevasses in a glacier, by the side of which our racial animosities and class differences are merely superficial cracks on the surface. Language, religion, national animosities, differences of condition, and saddest of all, difference of sex, split the world up into alien fragments. A ‘stranger’ and an ‘enemy’ were expressed in one language, by the same word. The learned and the unlearned, the slave and his master, the barbarian and the Greek, the man and the woman, stood on opposite sides of the gulfs, flinging hostility across. A Jewish peasant wandered up and down for three years in His own little country, which was the very focus of narrowness and separation and hostility, as the Roman historian felt when he called the Jews the ‘haters of the human race’; He gathered a few disciples, and He was crucified by a contemptuous Roman governor, who thought that the life of one fanatical Jew was a small price to pay for popularity with his troublesome subjects, and in a generation after, the clefts were being bridged and all over the Empire a strange new sense of unity was being breathed,

and 'Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free,' male and female, Jew and Greek, learned and ignorant, clasped hands and sat down at one table, and felt themselves 'all one in Christ Jesus.' They were ready to break all other bonds, and to yield to the uniting forces that streamed out from His Cross. There never had been anything like it. No wonder that the world began to babble about sorcery, and conspiracies, and complicity in unnameable vices. It was only that the disciples were obeying the 'new commandment,' and a new thing had come into the world—a community held together by love and not by geographical accidents or linguistic affinities, or the iron fetters of the conqueror. You sow the seed in furrows separated by ridges, and the ground is seamed, but when the seed springs the ridges are hidden, no division appears, and as far as the eye can reach, the cornfield stretches, rippling in unbroken waves of gold. The new commandment made a new thing, and the world wondered.

Now then, brethren, do not let us forget that, although to obey this commandment is in some respects a great deal harder to-day than it was then, the diverse circumstances in which Christian individuals and Christian communities are this day placed may modify the form of our obedience, but do not in the smallest degree weaken the obligation, for the individual Christian and for societies of Christians, to follow this commandment. The multiplication of numbers, the cessation of the armed hostility of the world, the great varieties in intellectual position in regard to the truths of Christianity, divergencies of culture, and many other things, are separating forces. But our Christianity is worth very little, if it cannot master these separating tendencies, even as in the

early days of freshness, the Christianity that sprang in these new converts' minds mastered the far more powerful separating tendencies with which they had to contend.

Every Christian man is under the obligation to recognise his kindred with every other Christian man—his kindred in the deep foundations of his spiritual being, which are far deeper, and ought to be far more operative in drawing together, than the superficial differences of culture or opinion or the like, which may part us. The bond that holds Christian men together is their common relation to the one Lord, and that ought to influence their attitude to one another. You say I am talking commonplaces. Yes; and the condition of Christianity this day is the sad and tragical sign that the commonplaces need to be talked about, till they are rubbed into the conscience of the Church as they never have been before.

Do not let us suppose that Christian love is mere sentiment. I shall have to speak a word or two about that presently, but I would fain lift the whole subject, if I can, out of the region of mere unctuous words and gush of half-feigned emotion, which mean nothing, and would make you feel that it is a very practical commandment, gripping us hard, when our Lord says to us, 'Love one another.'

I have spoken about the accidental conditions which make obedience to this commandment difficult. The real reason which makes the obedience to it difficult is the slackness of our own hold on the Centre. In the measure in which we are filled with Jesus Christ, in that measure will that expression of His spirit and His life become natural to us. Every Christian has affinities with every other Christian, in the depths of his being,

so as that he is a great deal more like his brother, who is possessor of 'like precious faith,' however unlike the two may be in outlook, in idiosyncrasy, and culture and in creed, than he is to another man with whom he may have a far closer sympathy in all these matters than he has with the brother in question, but from whom he is parted by this, that the one trusts and loves and obeys Jesus Christ, and the other does not. So, for individuals and for churches, the commandment takes this shape—Go down to the depths and you will find that you are closer to the Christian man or community which seems furthest from you, than you are to the non-Christian who seems nearest to you. Therefore, let your love follow your kinship, and your heart recognise the oneness that knits you together. That is a revolutionary commandment; what would become of our present organisations of Christianity if it were obeyed? That is a revolutionary commandment; what would become of our individual relations to the whole family who, in every place, and in many tongues, and with many creeds, call on Jesus as on their Lord, their Lord and ours, if it were obeyed? I leave you to answer the question. Only I say the commandment has for its first scope all who, in every place, love the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is more than that involved in it. The very same principle which makes this love to one another imperative upon all disciples, makes it equally imperative upon every follower of Jesus Christ to embrace in a real affection all whom Jesus so loved as to die for them. If I am to love a Christian man because he and I love Christ, I am to love everybody, because Christ loves me and everybody, and because He died on the Cross for me and for all men. And

so one of the other Apostles, or, at least, the letter which goes by his name, laid hold on the true connection when, instead of concentrating Christian affection on the Church, and letting the world go to the devil as an alien thing, he said: 'Add to your faith,' this, that, and the other, and 'brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity.' The particular does not exclude the general, it leads to the general. The fire kindled upon the hearth gives warmth to all the chamber. The circles are concentric, and the widest sweep is struck from the same middle point as the narrow. So the new commandment does not cut humanity into two halves, but gathers all diversity into one, and spreads the great reconciling of Christian love over all the antagonisms and oppositions of earth. Let me ask you to notice—

II. The example of the new commandment, 'As I have loved you.'

That solemn 'as' lifts itself up before us, shines far ahead of us, ought to draw us to itself in hope, and not to repel us from itself in despair. 'As I have loved'—what a tremendous thing for a man to stand up before his fellows, and say, 'Take Me as the perfect example of perfect love; and let My example—undimmed by the mists of gathering centuries, and unweakened by the change of condition, and circumstance, fresh as ever after ages have passed, and closely-fitting as ever all varieties of human character and condition—stand before you; the ideal that I have realised, and you will be blessed in the proportion in which you seek, though you fail, to realise it!' There is, I venture to believe, only one aspect of Jesus Christ in which such a setting forth of Himself as the perfect Incarnation of perfect love is warrantable; and that

is found in the old belief that His very birth was the result of His love, and that His death was the climax of that love. And if so, we have to turn to Bethlehem, and the whole life, and the Cross at its end, as being the Christ-given example and model for our love to our brethren.

What do we see there? I have said that there is too much of mere sickly sentimentality about the ordinary treatment of this great commandment, and that I desired to lift it out of that region into a far nobler, more strenuous, and difficult one. This is what we see in that life and in that death:—First of all—the activity of love—‘Let us not love in words, but in deed and in truth’; then we see the self-forgetfulness of love—‘Even Christ pleased not Himself’; then we see the self-sacrifice of love—‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ And in these three points, on which I would fain enlarge if I might, active love, self-oblivious love, self-sacrificing love, you have the pattern set for us all. Christian love is no mere sickly maiden, full of sentimental emotions and honeyed words. She is a strenuous virgin, girt for service, a heroine ready for dangers, and prepared to be a martyr if it be needful. Love’s language is sacrifice. ‘I give thee myself,’ is its motto. And that is the pattern that is set before us all—‘as I have loved you.’

I have tried to show you how the commandment was new in many particulars, and it is for ever new in this particular, that it is for ever before us, unattained, and drawing faithful hearts to itself, and ever opening out into new heroisms and, therefore, blessedness, of self-sacrifice, and ever leading us to confess the differences, deep, tragic, sinful, between us and Him who—we

sometimes think too presumptuously—we venture to say is our Lord and Master.

Did you ever see in some great picture gallery a copyist sitting in front of a Raffaele, and comparing his poor feeble daub, all out of drawing, and with little of the divine beauty that the master had breathed over his canvas, even if it preserved the mere mechanical outline? That is what you and I should do with our lives: take them and put them down side by side with the original. We shall have to do it some day. Had we better not do it now, and try to bring the copy a little nearer to the masterpiece; and let that 'as I have loved you' shine before us and draw us on to unattainable heights?

And now, lastly, we have here—

III. The motive power for obedience to the commandment.

That is as new as all the rest. That 'as' expresses the manner of the love, but it also expresses the motive and the power. It might be translated into the equivalent 'in the fashion in which,' or it might be translated into the equivalent 'since—' 'I have loved you.' The original might bear the rendering, 'that ye also *may* love one another.' That is to say, what keeps men from obeying this commandment is the instinctive self-regard which is natural to us all. There are muscles in the body which are so constructed that they close tightly; and the heart is something like one of these sphincter muscles—it shuts by nature, especially if there has been anything put inside it over which it can shut and keep it all to itself. But there is one thing that dethrones Self, and enthrones the angel Love in a heart, and that is, that into that heart there shall come surging the sense of the great

love 'wherewith I have loved you.' That melts the iceberg; nothing else will.

That love of Christ to us, received into our hearts, and there producing an answering love to Him, will make us, in the measure in which we live in it and let it rule us, love everything and every person that He loves. That love of Jesus Christ, stealing into our hearts and there sweetening the ever-springing 'issues of life,' will make them flow out in glad obedience to any commandment of His. That love of Jesus Christ, received into our hearts, and responded to by our answering love, will work, as love always does, a magical transformation. A great monastic teacher wrote his precious book about *The Imitation of Christ*. 'Imitation' is a great word, 'Transformation' is a greater. 'We all,' receiving on the mirror of our loving hearts the love of Jesus Christ, 'are changed into the same likeness.' Thus, then, the love, which is our pattern, is also our motive and our power for obedience, and the more we bring ourselves under its influences, the more we shall love all those who are beloved by, and lovers of, Jesus.

That is the one foundation for a world knit together in the bonds of amity and concord. There have been attempts at brotherhood, and the guillotine has ended what was begun in the name of 'fraternity.' Men build towers, but there is no cement between the bricks, unless the love of Christ holds them together, and therefore Babel after Babel comes down about the ears of its builders. But notwithstanding all that is dark to-day, and though the war-clouds are lowering, and the hearts of men are inflamed with fierce passions, Christ's commandment is Christ's promise; and though the vision tarry, it will surely come. So even to-day

Christian men ought to stand for Christ's peace, and for Christ's love. The old commandment which we have had from the beginning, is the new commandment that fits to-day as it fits all the ages. It is a dream, say some. Yes, a dream; but a morning dream which comes true. Let us do the little we can to make it true, and to bring about the day when the flock of men will gather round the one Shepherd, who loved them to the death, and who has bid them and helped them to 'love one another as'—and since—'He has loved them.'

QUO VADIS?

'Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice.'—JOHN xiii. 37, 38.

PETER's main characteristics are all in operation here; his eagerness to be in the front, his habit of blurting out his thoughts and feelings, his passionate love for his Master, and withal his inability to understand Him and his self-confident arrogance. He has broken in upon Christ's solemn words, entirely deaf to their deep meaning, but blindly and blunderingly laying hold of one thought only, that Jesus is departing, and that he is to be left alone. So he asks the question, 'Lord! whither goest Thou?'—not so much caring about that, as meaning by his question—'tell me where, and then I will come too'; pledging himself to follow faithfully, as a dog behind his master, wherever He went.

Our Lord answered the underlying meaning of the words, repeating with a personal application what He had just before said as a general principle—'Whither I

go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.' Then followed this noteworthy dialogue.

The whole significance of the incident is preserved for us in the beautiful legend which tells us how, near the city of Rome, on the Appian Way, as Peter was flying for his life, he met the Lord, and again said to Him: 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' The words of the question, as given in the Vulgate, are the name of the site of the supposed interview, and of the little church which stands on it. The Master answered: 'I go to Rome, to be crucified again.' The answer smote the heart of the Apostle, and turned the cowardly fugitive into a hero; and he followed his Lord, and went gladly to his death. For it was that death which had to be accomplished before Peter was able to follow his Lord.

Now, as to the words before us, I think we shall best gather their significance, and lay it upon our own hearts, if we simply follow the windings of the dialogue. There are three points: the audacious question, the rash vow, and the sad forecast.

I. The audacious question.

As Peter's first question, 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' meant not so much what it said, as 'I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest; tell me, that I may'; so the second question, in like manner, is really not so much a question, 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' as the nearest possible approach to a flat contradiction of our Lord. Peter puts his words into the shape of an interrogation; what he means is, 'Yes, I *can* follow Thee; and in proof thereof, I will lay down my life for Thy sake.' The man's persistence, the man's love leading him to lack of reverence, came out in this (as I have ventured to call it) audacious question. Its underlying

meaning was a refusal to believe the Master's word. But yet there was in it a nobility of resolution—broken afterwards, but never mind about that—to endure anything rather than to be separate from the Lord. Yet, though it was noble in its motive, but lacking in reverence in its form, there was a deeper error than that in it. Peter did not know what 'following' meant, and he had to be taught that first. One of the main reasons why he could not follow was because he did not understand what was involved. It was something more than marching behind his Master, even to a Cross. There was a deeper discipline and a more strenuous effort needed than would have availed for such a kind of following.

Let us look a little onwards into his life. Recall that scene on the morning of the day by the banks of the lake, when he waded through the shallow water, and cast himself, dripping, at his Master's feet, and, having by his threefold confession obliterated his threefold denial, was taken back to his Lord's love, and received the permission for which he had hungered, and which he had been told, in the upper room, could not 'now' be given: 'Jesus said to him, Follow thou Me.' What a flood of remembrances must then have rushed over the penitent Peter! how he must have thought to himself, 'So soon, so soon is the "canst not" changed into a *canst*! So soon has the "afterwards" come to be the present!'

And long years after that, when he was an old man, and experience had taught him what *following* meant, he shared his privilege with all the dispersed strangers to whom he wrote, and said to them, with a definite reference to this incident, and to the other after the Resurrection, 'leaving us an example. that we (not I

only, as I used to think, in my exuberant days of ignorance) should follow in His steps.'

So, brethren, this blundering, loving, audacious question suggests to us that to follow Jesus Christ is the supreme direction for all conduct. Men of all creeds, men of no creed, admit that. The

'Loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought,'

which is set forth in that life constitutes the living law to which all conduct is to be conformed, and will be noble in proportion as it is conformed.

There is the great blessing, and solemn obligation, and lofty prerogative of Christian morality, that for obedience to a precept it substitutes following a Person, and instead of saying to men 'Be good,' it says to them 'Be Christlike.' It brings the conception of duty out of the region of abstractions into the region of living realities. For the cold statuesque ideal of perfection it substitutes a living Man, with a heart to love, and a hand to help us. Thereby the whole aspect of striving after the right is changed; for the work is made easier, and companionship comes in to aid morality, when Jesus Christ says to us, 'Be like Me; and then you will be good and blessed.' Effort will be all but as blessed as attainment, and the sense of pressing hard after Him will be only less restful than the consciousness of having attained. To follow Him is bliss, to reach Him is heaven.

But in order that this following should be possible, there must be something done that had not been done when Peter asked, 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' One reason why he could not was, as I said, because he did not know yet what 'following' meant, and because

he was yet unfit for this assimilation of his character and of his conduct to the likeness of his Lord. And another reason was because the Cross still lay before the Lord, and until that death of infinite love and utter self-sacrifice for others had been accomplished, the pattern was not yet complete, nor the highest ideal of human life realised in life. Therefore the 'following' was impossible. Christ must die before He has completed the example that we are to follow, and Christ must die before the impulse shall be given to us, which shall make us able to tread, however falteringly and far behind, in His footsteps.

The essence of His life and of His death lies in the two things, entire suppression of personal will in obedience to the will of the Father, and entire self-sacrifice for the sake of humanity. And however there is—and God forbid that I should ever forget in my preaching that there is—a uniqueness in that sacrifice, in that life, and in that death, which beggars all imitation, and needs and tolerates no repetition whilst the world lasts, still along with this, there is that which is imitable in the life and imitable in the death of the Master. To follow Jesus is to live denying self for God, and to live sacrificing self for men. Nothing less than these are included in the solemn words, 'leaving us'—even in the act and article of death when He 'suffered for us'—'an example that we should follow His steps.'

The word rendered 'example' refers to the headline which the writing-master gives his pupils to copy, line by line. We all know how clumsy the pothooks and hangers are, how blurred the page with many a blot. And yet there, at the top of it, stands the Master's fair writing, and though even the last line on the page will be blotted and blurred, when we turn it over and begin

on the new leaf, the copy will be like the original, 'and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' 'Thou shalt follow Me afterwards' is a commandment; blessed be God, it is also a promise. For let us not forget that the 'following' ends in an attaining; even as the Lord Himself has said in another connection, when He spake: 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there shall also My servant be.' Of course, if we follow, we shall come to the same place one day. And so the great promise will be fulfilled; 'they shall follow the Lamb,' in that higher life, 'whithersoever He goeth'; and not as here imperfectly, and far behind, but close beside Him, and keeping step for step, being with Him first, and following Him afterwards.

But let us remember that with regard to that future following and its completeness, the same present incapacity applies, as clogs and mars the 'following,' which is conforming our lives to His. For, as He Himself has said to us, 'I go to prepare a place for you,' and until He had passed through death and into His glory, there was no standing-ground for human feet on the golden pavements, and heaven was inaccessible to man until Christ had died. Thus, as all life is changed when it is looked upon as being a following of Jesus, so death becomes altogether other when it is so regarded. The first martyr outside the city wall, bruised and battered by the cruel stones, remembered his Master's death, and shaped his own to be like it. As Jesus, when He died, had said: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,' Stephen, dying, said: 'Lord Jesus, receive My spirit.' As the Master had given His last breath to the prayer, 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do,' so Stephen shaped his last utterance

to a conformity with his Lord's, in which the difference is as significant as the likeness, and said, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And then, as the record beautifully says, amidst all that wild hubbub and cruel assault, 'he fell on sleep,' as a child on its mother's breast. Death is changed when it becomes the following of Christ.

II. We have here a rash vow.

'I will lay down my life for Thy sake.' What a strange inversion of parts is here! 'Lay down thy life for My sake'—with Calvary less than four-and-twenty hours off, when Christ laid down His life for Peter's sake. Peter was guilty of an anachronism in the words, for the time did not come for the disciple to die for his Lord till after the Lord had died for His disciple. But he was right in feeling, though he felt it only in regard to an external and physical act, that to follow Jesus, it was necessary to be ready to die for Him. And that is the great truth which underlies and half redeems the rashness of this vow, and needs to be laid upon our hearts, if we are ever to be the true followers of the Master. Death for Christ is necessary if we are to follow Him. There is nothing that a man can do deeply and truly, in a manner worthy of a Christian, which has not underlying it, either the death of self-will and all the godless nature, or if need be the actual physical death, which is a much smaller matter. You cannot follow Christ except you die daily. No man has ever yet trodden in His footsteps except on condition of, moment by moment, slaying self, suppressing self, abjuring self, breaking the connection of self with the material world, and yielding up himself as a living sacrifice, in a living death, to the Lord of life and death. Do not think that 'following Christ' is a mere sentimental

expression for so much morality as we can conveniently get into our daily life. But remember that here, with all his rashness, with all his ignorance, with all his superficiality, the Apostle has laid hold upon the great permanent, but alas! much-forgotten principle, that to die is essential to following Jesus.

This daily dying, which is a far harder thing to do than to go to a cross once, and have done with it—was impossible for Peter then, though he did not know it. His vow was a rash one, because the laying down of Christ's life, for Peter's sake and for ours, had not yet been accomplished. *There* is the motive-power by which, and by which alone, drawn in gratitude, and melted down from all our selfishness, we, too, in our measure and our turn, are able to yield ourselves, in daily crucifixion of our evil, and daily abnegation of self-trust, and self-pleasing, and self-will, to the Lord that has died for us. He must lay down His life for our sakes, and we must know He has done it, and rest upon Him as our great Sacrifice and our atoning Priest, or else we shall never be so loosed from the tyranny of self as to be ready to live by dying, and to die that we may live for His sake. 'I go to Rome to be crucified again' were the words in which the old legend braced the fugitive and made a hero of him, and sent him back to be crucified like his Lord and to offer up his physical life, as he had long since offered up his self-will and his arrogance to the Lord that had died for him.

O Lord our Father! help us, we beseech Thee, that we may be of the sheep that hear the Shepherd's voice and follow Him. Strengthen our faith in that dear Lord who has laid down His life for us, that we may daily, by self-denial and self-sacrifice, lay down our lives for Him, and follow Him here in all the footsteps of His love.

A RASH VOW

Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice.—
JOHN xiii. 38.

IN the last sermon I partly considered the dialogue of which this is the concluding portion, and found that it consisted of an audacious question: 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' which really meant a contradiction of our Lord; of a rash vow: 'I will lay down my life for Thy sake'—and of a sad forecast: 'The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice.' I paused in the middle of considering the second of these three stages, the rash vow. I then pointed out that, however ignorant the Apostle was of what 'following Christ' meant, he had hit the mark, and stumbled unknowingly upon the very essence of the Christian life, and an eternal truth, when he recognised that, somehow or other, to 'follow Christ' meant to die for Him. That is so, and is so always, for there is no following Christ which is not a 'dying daily,' by self-immolation and detachment from the world, and from the life of sense and self. But this rash vow has to be looked at from a somewhat different point of view, and we have to consider not only the strangely blended right and wrong, error and deep truth, that lie in its substance, but the strangely blended right and wrong in the state of feeling and thought, on the part of the Apostle, which it represents. And taking up the dropped thread, I first deal with that, and then with the sad forecast which follows.

So then, looking at these words as being like all

our words, even the best of them, strangely mingled of right and wrong, good and evil, I find in them—

I. A noble, sincere, but transient emotion and impulse.

‘I will lay down my life for Thy sake.’ Peter meant it, every word of it; and he would have done it too, if only a gibbet or cross could have been set up then and there in the upper room. But unfortunately the moments of elevation and high-wrought enthusiasm, and the calls to martyrdom, do not always coincide. In the upper room, with its sacred atmosphere, it was easy to feel, and would have been easy to do, nobly. But it was not so easy, lying drowsily in Gethsemane, in the cold spring night, waiting for the Master’s coming out from beneath the trembling shadows of the olive trees, or huddled up by the fire at the lower end of the hall in the grey morning, when vitality is at its lowest.

So the sincere, noble utterance was but the expression of impulse and emotion which lifted Peter for a moment, and did him good, but which likewise, running through him, left him dry, and all the weaker because of the gush of feeling which had foamed itself away in empty words. For let us never forget that however high, noble, or divinely inspired emotion may be, in its nature it is transient and is sure to be followed by reaction. Like the winter torrents in some parched land, the more they foam, the more speedily does the bed of them dry up again, and the more they carry down the very soil in which growth and fertility would be possible. A rush of feeling is apt to leave behind hard, insensitive rock. There is a close connection between a predominantly emotional Christianity and a very imperfect life. Feeling is apt

to be a substitute for action. Is it not a very remarkable thing that the word 'benevolence,' which means 'kindly feeling,' has come to take on the meaning rightly belonging to 'beneficence,' which means 'kindly doing'? The emotional man blinds and hoodwinks himself, by thinking that his quick sensibility and lofty enthusiasm and warmth of emotion are action or as good as action. 'Be thou warmed and filled,' he says to his brother, and, in a lazy expansion of heart, forgets that he has never lifted a finger to help.

God forbid that I should seem to deprecate emotional religion or religious emotion! that is the last thing that needs to be done in this generation. If the Churches want one thing more than another, it is that their Christianity should become far more emotional than it is, and their impulses stronger, swifter, more spontaneous, more overmastering, and that they should be urged by these, and not merely by the reluctant recognition that such and such a piece of sacrifice or effort is a debt that they are obliged to clear off. Their service will be glad service, only when it is impulsive service and emotional service. Dear brethren, a Christian man whose life is not influenced by the deepest and most fervid emotion of love to the great Love that died for him, is a monster. 'The Lord's fire is in Jerusalem, and His furnace in Zion'—is that a description of the fervour of this Church, or of any Church in Christendom? A furnace? An ice-house! Think of some deserted cottage, with the roof fallen in, and in the cold chimney-place a rusty grate with some dead embers in it, and the snow lying upon the top of it—that is a truer description of a great many of our churches than 'the Lord's furnace.'

But the lesson to be taken from this incident before us is not the danger of emotion; it is rather the necessity of emotion, but with two provisos, that it shall be emotion based upon a clear recognition of the great truth that He has laid down His life for me; and that it shall be emotion harnessed to work, and not wasted in words. The mightier the plunge of the fall, the more electrical energy you can get out of it, and set that to work to drive the wheels of life. Do not be afraid of emotion; you will make little of your Christianity unless you have it. But be sure that it is under the guidance of a clear perception of the truth that evokes it, and that it is all used to turn the wheels of life. 'Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.' Better is it that emotion should be reticent and active than that it should be voluble and idle. It is a good servant, but a bad master. A man that trusts to impulse and emotion to further his Christian course, is like a ship in that belt of variable winds that lies near the Equator, where there will be a fine ten-knot breeze for an hour or two, and then a sickly, stagnating calm. Push further south, and get into the steady 'trades,' where the wind blows with equable and persistent force all the year round in the same direction. Convert impulses and emotions into steadfast principle, warmed by emotion and borne on by impulse.

II. Again, this rash vow is an illustration of a confidence, also strangely blended of good and evil.

'I will lay down my life for Thy sake.' As I have said, Peter meant it. His words are paralleled by other words, in which two of the Lord's disciples answered His solemn question: 'Are ye able to drink

of the cup that I drink of?' with the unhesitating answer, 'We are able.' A great teacher has regarded that saying as one of 'the ventures of faith.' Perhaps it was. Perhaps there was as much self-confidence as faith in it. Certainly there was more self-confidence than faith in Peter's answer, and his self-confidence collapsed when the trial came.

The world and the Church hold entirely antagonistic notions about the value of self-reliance. The world says that it is a condition of power. The Church says that it is the root of weakness. Self-confidence shuts a man out from the help of God, and so shuts him out from the source of power. For if you will think for a moment, you will see that the faith which the New Testament, in conformity with all wise knowledge of one's self, preaches as the one secret of power, has for its obverse—its other side—diffidence and self-distrust. No man trusts God as God ought to be trusted, who does not distrust himself as himself ought to be distrusted. To level a mountain is the only way to carry the water across where it stood. You can, by mechanism and locks, take a canal up to the top of a hill, but you cannot take a river up to the top, and the river of God's help flows through the valley and seeks the lowest levels. Faith and self-despair are the upper and the under sides of the same thing, like some cunningly-woven cloth, the one side bearing a different pattern from the other, and yet made of the same yarn, and the same threads passing from the upper to the under sides. So faith and self-distrust are but two names for one composite whole.

I was once shown an old Jewish coin which had on the one side the words 'sackcloth and ashes,' and

on the other side the words 'a crown of gold.' The coin meant to contrast what Israel had been with what Israel then was. The crown had come first; the sackcloth and ashes last. But we may use it for illustrating this point, on which I am now dwelling. Wherever, and only where, there are the sackcloth and ashes of self-despair there will be the crown of gold of an answering faith. When thus, as Wesley has it, in his great hymn: 'Confident in self-despair,' we cling to God, then we can say: 'When I am weak then am I strong,' 'Behold! we have no might, but our eyes are upon Thee.' If Peter had only said, 'By Thy help I will lay down my life for Thy sake,' his confidence would have been reasonable and blessed self-confidence, because it would have been confidence in a self inspired by divine power.

And so, brethren, whilst utter diffidence is right for us, and is the condition of all our reception of energy according to our need, the most absolute confidence—a confidence which, to the eye of the man that measures only visible things, will seem sheer insanity—is sobriety for a Christian. The world is perfectly right when it says: 'If you believe you can do a thing, you have gone a long way toward doing it.' The expectation of success has often the knack of fulfilling itself. But the world does not know our secret, and our secret is that our humble faith brings into the field the reserves with the Captain of our salvation at their head. Therefore a self-distrusting Christian can say, and say without exaggeration or presumption, 'I can do all things in Christ, strengthening me from within.'

The Church's ideals are possibilities, when you bring God into the account, and they look like insanity when

you do not. Take, for instance, missions. What an absurdity to talk about a handful of Christian people—for we are only a handful as compared with the whole world—carrying their Gospel into every corner of the earth, and finding everywhere a response to it. Yes; it is absurd; but, wise Mr. Calculator, counter of heads, you have forgotten God in your estimate of whether it is reasonable or unreasonable. Again, take the Christian ideal of absolute perfection of character. ‘What nonsense to talk as if any man could ever come to that.’ Yes!—as if any *man* could come to that, I grant you. But if God is with him, the nonsense is to suppose that he will not come to it. Here is a row of cyphers as long as your arm. They mean nothing. Put a 1 at the left-hand end of the row; and what does it mean then? So the faith that brings Christ into the life, and into the Church, makes ‘nobodies’ into mighty men—‘laughs at impossibilities, and cries, It shall be done!’

Still further, here, in this rash vow, we have an underestimate of difficulties. There was another incident in the life of the Apostle, a strange replica of this one, into which he pushed himself, just as he did into the high priest’s hall, partly out of curiosity and a wish to be prominent; partly out of love to his Master. Without a moment’s consideration of the peril into which he was thrusting himself, he sat in the boat, and said, ‘Bid me come to Thee on the water.’ He forgot that He was heavy, and that water was not solid, and that the wind was high and the lake rough, and when he put his foot over the side and felt the cold waves creeping up his knees, his courage ebbed out with his faith, and he began to sink. Then he cried, ‘Lord! help me!’ If he had thought for a

moment of the reality of the case, he would have sat still in the boat. If he had thought of what would be in his way in following Jesus to death, he would have hesitated to vow. But it is so much easier to resolve heroisms in a quiet corner than to do them when the strain comes, and it is so much easier to do some one great thing that has in it enthusiasm and nobility, and conspicuousness of sacrifice, especially if it can be got over in a moment, like having one's head cut off with an axe, than it is to 'die daily.' Ah! brethren, it is the little difficulties that make *the* difficulty. You read in the newspapers in the autumn, every now and then, of trains, in that wonderful country across the water, being stopped by caterpillars. The Christian train is stopped by an army of caterpillars, far oftener than it is by some solid and towering barrier. Our Christian lives are a great deal likelier to come to failure, because we do not take into account the multiplied small antagonisms than because we are not ready to face the greater ones. What would you think of a bridge-builder, who built a bridge across some mountain torrent and made no allowance for freshets and floods when the ice melted? His bridge and his piers would be gone the first winter. You remember who it was that said that he went into the Franco-German War 'with a light heart,' and in seven weeks came Sedan and the dethronement of an Emperor, and the surrender of an army. 'Blessed is he that feareth always.' There is no more fatal error than an underestimate of our difficulties.

III. Let me say a word about the sad forecast here.

'Thou shalt deny me thrice.'

We cannot say that poor Peter's fall was at all an anomalous or uncommon thing. He did exactly what

a great many of us are doing. He could—and I have no doubt he would—have gone to the death for Jesus Christ; but he could not stand being laughed at for Him. He would have been ready to meet the executioner's sharp sword, but the servant-girl's sharp tongue was more than he could bear. And so he denied Jesus, not because he was afraid of his skin—for I do not suppose that the servants had any notion of doing anything more than amusing themselves with a few clumsy gibes at his expense—but because he could not bear to be made sport of.

Now, dear brethren, I suppose we are all of us more or less movers in circles in which it sometimes is not considered 'good form' to show that we are Christian people. You young men in your warehouses, you students at the University, where it is a sign of being 'fossils' and 'behind the times' and 'not up to date' to say 'I am a Christian,' and all of us in our several places have sometimes to gather our courage together, and not be afraid to declare whose we are. No doubt life is a better witness than words, but no doubt also life is not so good a witness as it might be, unless it sometimes has the commentary of words as well. Thus, to confess Christ means two things; to say sometimes—in the face of a smile of scorn, which is often harder to bear than something much more dangerous—'I am His,' and to live Christ, and to say by conduct 'I am His.' 'Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father, and whosoever shall deny Me, him will I also deny.' Do not button your coats over your uniform. Do not take the cockade out of your hats when you go amongst 'the other side.' Live Jesus, and, when advisable, preach Jesus.

But Peter's fall, which is typical of what we are all

tempted to do, has in it a gracious message; for it proclaims the possibility of recovery from any depth of descent, and of coming back again from any distance of wandering. Did you ever notice how Peter's fall was burnt in upon his memory, so as that when he began to preach after Pentecost, the shape that his indictment of his hearers takes is, 'Ye denied the Holy One and the Just,' and how, long after—if the second Epistle which goes by his name is his—in summing up the crimes of the heretics whom he is branding, he speaks of their 'denying the Lord that bought them.' He never forgot his denial, and it remained with him as the expression for all that was wrong in a man's relation to Jesus Christ. And I suppose not only was it burnt in upon his memory, but it burnt out all his self-confidence. It is beautiful to see how, in his letter, he speaks over and over again of 'fear' as being a wise temper of mind for a Christian. As George Herbert has it, 'A sad, wise valour is the true complexion.' Thus the man that had been so confident in himself learned to say 'Be ready to give to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.'

And do you not think that his fall drew him closer to Jesus Christ than ever he had been before, as he learned more of His pardoning love and mercy? Was he not nearer the Lord on that morning when the two together, alone, talked after the Resurrection? Was he not nearer Him when he struggled to his feet from the boat on the lake, on that morning when he was received back into his office as Christ's Apostle? Did he ever forget how he had sinned? Did he ever forget how Christ had pardoned? Did he ever forget how Christ loved and would keep him? Ah, no! The

rope that is broken is strongest where it is spliced, not because it was broken, but because a cunning hand has strengthened it. We may be the stronger for our sins, not because sin strengthens, for it weakens, but because God restores. It is possible that we may build a fairer structure on the ruins of our old selves. It is possible that we may turn every field of defeat into a field of victory. It is possible that we may

‘Fall to rise; be beaten, to fight better.’

If only we cling to the Lord our Strength, the promise shall be ours—whatever our failures, denials, backslidings, inconsistencies—‘though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.’

FAITH IN GOD AND CHRIST

‘Let not your heart be troubled . . . believe in God, believe also in Me.’

JOHN xiv. 1.

THE twelve were sitting in the upper chamber, stupefied with the dreary, half-understood prospect of Christ's departure. He, forgetting His own burden, turns to comfort and encourage them. These sweet and great words most singularly blend gentleness and dignity. Who can reproduce the cadence of soothing tenderness, soft as a mother's hand, in that ‘Let not your heart be troubled’? And who can fail to feel the tone of majesty in that ‘Believe in God, believe also in Me’?

The Greek presents an ambiguity in the latter half of the verse, for the verb may be either indicative or imperative, and so we may read four different ways,

according as we render each of the two 'believes' in either of these two fashions. Our Authorised and Revised Versions concur in adopting the indicative 'Ye believe' in the former clause and the imperative in the latter. But I venture to think that we get a more true and appropriate meaning if we keep both clauses in the same mood, and read them both as imperatives: 'Believe in God, believe also in Me.' It would be harsh, I think, to take one as an affirmation and the other as a command. It would be irrelevant, I think, to remind the disciples of their belief in God. It would break the unity of the verse and destroy the relation of the latter half to the former, the former being a negative precept: 'Let not your heart be troubled'; and the latter being a positive one: 'Instead of being troubled, believe in God, and believe in Me.' So, for all these reasons, I venture to adopt the reading I have indicated.

I. Now in these words the first thing that strikes me is that Christ here points to Himself as the object of precisely the same religious trust which is to be given to God.

It is only our familiarity with these words that blinds us to their wonderfulness and their greatness. Try to hear them for the first time, and to bring into remembrance the circumstances in which they were spoken. Here is a man sitting among a handful of His friends, who is within four-and-twenty hours of a shameful death, which to all appearance was the utter annihilation of all His claims and hopes, and He says, 'Trust in God, and trust in Me'! I think that if we had heard that for the first time, we should have understood a little better than some of us do the depth of its meaning.

What is it that Christ asks for here? Or rather let

me say, What is it that Christ offers to us here? For we must not look at the words as a demand or as a command, but rather as a merciful invitation to do what it is life and blessing to do. It is a very low and inadequate interpretation of these words which takes them as meaning little more than 'Believe in God, believe that He is; believe in Me, believe that I am.' But it is scarcely less so to suppose that the mere assent of the understanding to His teaching is all that Christ is asking for here. By no means; what He invites us to goes a great deal deeper than that. The essence of it is an act of the will and of the heart, not of the understanding at all. A man may believe in Him as a historical person, may accept all that is said about Him here, and yet not be within sight of the trust in Him of which He here speaks. For the essence of the whole is not the intellectual process of assent to a proposition, but the intensely personal act of yielding up will and heart to a living person. Faith does not grasp a doctrine, but a heart. The trust which Christ requires is the bond that unites souls with Him; and the very life of it is entire committal of myself to Him in all my relations and for all my needs, and absolute utter confidence in Him as all-sufficient for everything that I can require. Let us get away from the cold intellectualism of 'belief' into the warm atmosphere of 'trust,' and we shall understand better than by many volumes what Christ here means and the sphere and the power and the blessedness of that faith which Christ requires.

Further, note that, whatever may be this believing in Him which He asks from us or invites us to render, it is precisely the same thing which He bids us render to God. The two clauses in the original bring out that idea even

more vividly than in our version, because the order of the words in the latter clause is inverted; and they read literally thus: 'Believe in God, in Me also believe.' The purpose of the inversion is to put these two, God and Christ, as close together as possible; and to put the two identical emotions at the beginning and at the end, at the two extremes and outsides of the whole sentence. Could language be more deliberately adopted and moulded, even in its consecution and arrangement, to enforce this thought, that whatever it is that we give to Christ, it is the very same thing that we give to God? And so He here proposes Himself as the worthy and adequate recipient of all these emotions of confidence, submission, resignation, which make up religion in its deepest sense.

That tone is by no means singular in this place. It is the uniform tone and characteristic of our Lord's teaching. Let me remind you just in a sentence of one or two instances. What did He think of Himself who stood up before the world and, with arms outstretched, like that great white Christ in Thorwaldsen's lovely statue, said to all the troop of languid and burdened and fatigued ones crowding at His feet: 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'? That surely is a divine prerogative. What did He think of Himself who said, 'All men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father'? What did He think of Himself who, in that very Sermon on the Mount (to which the advocates of a maimed and mutilated Christianity tell us they pin their faith, instead of to mystical doctrines) declared that He Himself was the Judge of humanity, and that all men should stand at His bar and receive from Him 'according to the deeds done in their body'? Upon any honest

principle of interpreting these Gospels, and unless you avowedly go picking and choosing amongst His words, accepting this and rejecting that, you cannot eliminate from the scriptural representation of Jesus Christ the fact that He claimed as His own the emotions of the heart to which only God has a right and only God can satisfy.

I do not dwell upon that point, but I say, in one sentence, we have to take that into account if we would estimate the character of Jesus Christ as a Teacher and as a Man. I would not turn away from Him any imperfect conceptions, as they seem to me, of His nature and His work—rather would I foster them, and lead them on to a fuller recognition of the full Christ—but this I am bound to say, that for my part I believe that nothing but the wildest caprice, dealing with the Gospels according to one's own subjective fancies, irrespective altogether of the evidence, can strike out from the teaching of Christ this its characteristic difference. What signalises Him, and separates Him from all other religious teachers, is not the clearness or the tenderness with which He reiterated the truths about the divine Father's love, or about morality, and justice, and truth, and goodness; but *the* peculiarity of His call to the world is, 'Believe in Me.' And if He said that, or anything like it, and if the representations of His teaching in these four Gospels, which are the only source from which we get any notion of Him at all, are to be accepted, why, then, one of two things follows. Either He was wrong, and then He was a crazy enthusiast, only acquitted of blasphemy because convicted of insanity; or else—or else—He was 'God, manifest in the flesh.' It is vain to bow down before a fancy portrait of a bit of Christ, and to exalt the humble

sage of Nazareth, and to leave out the very thing that makes the difference between Him and all others, namely, these either audacious or most true claims to be the Son of God, the worthy Recipient and the adequate Object of man's religious emotions. 'Believe in God, in Me also believe.'

II. Now, secondly, notice that faith in Christ and faith in God are not two, but one.

These two clauses on the surface present juxtaposition. Looked at more closely they present interpenetration and identity. Jesus Christ does not merely set Himself up by the side of God, nor are we worshippers of two Gods when we bow before Jesus and bow before the Father; but faith in Christ is faith in God, and faith in God which is not faith in Christ is imperfect, incomplete, and will not long last. To trust in Him is to trust in the Father; to trust in the Father is to trust in Him.

What is the underlying truth that is here? How comes it that these two objects blend into one, like two figures in a stereoscope; and that the faith which flows to Jesus Christ rests upon God? This is the underlying truth, that Jesus Christ, Himself divine, is the divine Revealer of God. I need not dwell upon the latter of these two thoughts: how there is no real knowledge of the real God in the depth of His love, the tenderness of His nature or the lustrousness of His holiness; how there is no certitude; how the God that we see outside of Jesus Christ is sometimes doubt, sometimes hope, sometimes fear, always far-off and vague, an abstraction rather than a person, 'a stream of tendency' without us, that which is unnameable, and the like. I need not dwell upon the thought that Jesus Christ has showed us a Father, has brought a God to our

hearts whom we can love, whom we can know really though not fully, of whom we can be sure with a certitude which is as deep as the certitude of our own personal being; that He has brought to us a God before whom we do not need to crouch far off, that He has brought to us a God whom we can trust. Very significant is it that Christianity alone puts the very heart of religion in the act of trust. Other religions put it in dread, worship, service, and the like. Jesus Christ alone says, the bond between men and God is that blessed one of trust. And He says so because He alone brings us a God whom it is not ridiculous to tell men to trust.

And, on the other hand, the truth that underlies this is not only that Jesus Christ is the Revealer of God, but that He Himself is divine. Light shines through a window, but the light and the glass that makes it visible have nothing in common with one another. The Godhead shines through Christ, but *He* is not a mere transparent medium. It is Himself that He is showing us when He is showing us God. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen'—not the light that streams through Me—but 'hath seen,' in Me, 'the Father.' And because He is Himself divine and the divine Revealer, therefore the faith that grasps Him is inseparably one with the faith that grasps God. Men could look upon a Moses, an Isaiah, or a Paul, and in them recognise the eradiation of the divinity that imparted itself through them, but the medium was forgotten in proportion as that which it revealed was beheld. You cannot forget Christ in order to see God more clearly, but to behold Him is to behold God.

And if that be true, these two things follow. One is that all imperfect revelation of God is prophetic of

and leads up towards, the perfect revelation in Jesus Christ. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives that truth in a very striking fashion. He compares all other means of knowing God to fragmentary syllables of a great word, of which one was given to one man and another to another. God 'spoke at sundry times and in manifold portions to the fathers by the prophets'; but the whole word is articulately uttered by the Son, in whom He has 'spoken unto us in these last times.' The imperfect revelation, by means of those who were merely mediums for the revelation leads up to Him who is Himself the Revelation, the Revealer, and the Revealed.

And in like manner, all the imperfect faith that, laying hold of other fragmentary means of knowing God, has tremulously tried to trust Him, finds its climax and consummate flower in the full-blossomed faith that lays hold upon Jesus Christ. The unconscious prophecies of heathendom; the trust that select souls up and down the world have put in One whom they dimly apprehended; the faith of the Old Testament saints; the rudimentary beginnings of a knowledge of God and of a trust in Him which are found in men to-day, and amongst us, outside of the circle of Christianity—all these things are as manifestly incomplete as a building reared half its height, and waiting for the corner-stone to be brought forth, the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the intelligent and full acceptance of Him and faith in Him.

And another thing is true, that without faith in Christ such faith in God as is possible is feeble, incomplete, and will not long last. Historically a pure theism is all but impotent. There is only one example of it on a large scale in the world, and that is a kind of

bastard Christianity—Mohammedanism; and we all know what good that is as a religion. There are plenty of people amongst us nowadays who claim to be very advanced thinkers, and who call themselves Theists, and not Christians. Well, I venture to say that that is a phase that will not last. There is little substance in it. The God whom men know outside of Jesus Christ is a poor, nebulous thing; an idea, not a reality. He, or rather It, is a film of cloud shaped into a vague form, through which you can see the stars. It has little power to restrain. It has less to inspire and impel. It has still less to comfort; it has least of all to satisfy the heart. You will have to get something more substantial than the far-off god of an unchristian Theism if you mean to sway the world and to satisfy men's hearts.

And so, dear brethren, I come to this—perhaps the word may be fitting for some that listen to me—‘Believe in God,’ and that you may, ‘believe also in Christ.’ For sure I am that when the stress comes, and you *want* a god, unless your god is the God revealed in Jesus Christ, he will be a powerless deity. If you have not faith in Christ, you will not long have faith in God that is vital and worth anything.

III. Lastly, this trust in Christ is the secret of a quiet heart.

It is of no use to say to men, ‘Let not your hearts be troubled,’ unless you finish the verse and say, ‘Believe in God, believe also in Christ.’ For unless we trust we shall certainly be troubled. The state of man in this world is like that of some of those sunny islands in southern seas, around which there often rave the wildest cyclones, and which carry in their bosoms, beneath all their riotous luxuriance of verdant beauty,

hidden fires, which ever and anon shake the solid earth and spread destruction. Storms without and earthquakes within—that is the condition of humanity. And where is the ‘rest’ to come from? All other defences are weak and poor. We have heard about ‘pills against earthquakes.’ That is what the comforts and tranquillising which the world supplies may fairly be likened to. Unless we trust we are, and we shall be, and should be, ‘troubled.’

If we trust we may be quiet. Trust is always tranquillity. To cast a burden off myself on others’ shoulders is always a rest. But trust in Jesus Christ brings infinitude on my side. Submission is repose. When we cease to kick against the pricks they cease to prick and wound us. Trust opens the heart, like the windows of the Ark tossing upon the black and fatal flood, for the entrance of the peaceful dove with the olive branch in its mouth. Trust brings Christ to my side in all His tenderness and greatness and sweetness. If I trust, ‘all is right that seems most wrong.’ If I trust, conscience is quiet. If I trust, life becomes ‘a solemn scorn of ills.’ If I trust, inward unrest is changed into tranquillity, and mad passions are cast out from him that sits ‘clothed and in his right mind’ at the feet of Jesus.

‘The wicked is like the troubled sea which cannot rest.’ But if I trust, my soul will become like the glassy ocean when all the storms sleep, and ‘birds of peace sit brooding on the charmed wave.’ ‘Peace I leave with you.’ ‘Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me.’

Help us, O Lord! to yield our hearts to Thy dear Son, and in Him to find Thyself and eternal rest.

‘MANY MANSIONS’

‘In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.’—JOHN xiv. 2.

SORROW needs simple words for its consolation; and simple words are the best clothing for the largest truths. These eleven poor men were crushed and desolate at the thought of Christ’s going; they fancied that if He left them they lost Him. And so, in simple, childlike words, which the weakest could grasp, and in which the most troubled could find peace, He said to them, after having encouraged their trust in Him, ‘There is plenty of room for you as well as for Me where I am going; and the frankness of our intercourse in the past might make you sure that if I were going to leave you I would have told you all about it. Did I ever hide from you anything that was painful? Did I ever allure you to follow Me by false promises? Should I have kept silence about it if our separation was to be eternal?’ So, simply, as a mother might hush her babe upon her breast, He soothes their sorrow. And yet, in the quiet words, so level to the lowest apprehension, there lie great truths, far deeper than we yet have appreciated, and which will enfold themselves in their majesty and their greatness through eternity. ‘In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.’

I. Now note in these words, first, the ‘Father’s house,’ and its ample room.

There is only one other occasion recorded in which our Lord used this expression, and it occurs in this same Gospel near the beginning; where in the narra-

tive of the first cleansing of the Temple we read that He said, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise.' The earlier use of the words may help to throw light upon one aspect of this latter employment of it, for there blend in the image the two ideas of what I may call domestic familiarity, and of that great future as being the reality of which the earthly Temple was intended to be the dim prophecy and shadow. Its courts, its many chambers, its ample porches with room for thronging worshippers, represented in some poor way the wide sweep and space of that higher house; and the sense of Sonship, which drew the Boy to His Father's house in the earliest hours of conscious childhood, speaks here.

Think for a moment of how sweet and familiar the conception of heaven as the Father's house makes it to us. There is something awful, even to the best and holiest souls, in the thought of even the glories beyond. The circumstances of death, which is its portal, our utter unacquaintance with all that lies behind the veil, the terrible silence and distance which falls upon our dearest ones as they are sucked into the cloud, all tend to make us feel that there is much that is solemn and awful even in the thought of eternal future blessedness. But how it is all softened when we say, 'My Father's house.' Most of us have long since left behind us the sweet security, the sense of the absence of all responsibility, the assurance of defence and provision, which used to be ours when we lived as children in a father's house here. But we may all look forward to the renewal, in far nobler form, of these early days, when the father's house meant the inexpugnable fortress where no evil could befall us, the abundant home where all wants were supplied, and where the shyest and

timidest child could feel at ease and secure. It is all coming again, brother, and amidst the august and unimaginable glories of that future the old feeling of being little children, nestling safe in the Father's house, will fill our quiet hearts once more.

And then consider how the conception of that Future as the Father's house suggests answers to so many of our questions about the relationship of the inmates to one another. Are they to dwell isolated in their several mansions? Is that the way in which children in a home dwell with each other? Surely if He be the Father, and heaven be His house, the relation of the redeemed to one another must have in it more than all the sweet familiarity and unrestrained frankness which subsists in the families of earth. A solitary heaven would be but half a heaven, and would ill correspond with the hopes that inevitably spring from the representation of it as 'my Father's house.'

But consider further that this great and tender name for heaven has its deepest meaning in the conception of it as a spiritual state of which the essential elements are the loving manifestation and presence of God as Father, the perfect consciousness of sonship, the happy union of all the children in one great family, and the derivation of all their blessedness from their Elder Brother.

The earthly Temple, to which there is some allusion in this great metaphor, was the place in which the divine glory was manifested to seeking souls, though in symbol, yet also in reality, and the representation of our text blends the two ideas of the free, frank intercourse of the home and of the magnificent revelations of the Holy of holies. Under either aspect of the phrase, whether we think of 'my Father's house' as temple or

as home, it sets before us, as the main blessedness and glory of heaven, the vision of the Father, the consciousness of sonship, and the complete union with Him. There are many subsidiary and more outward blessednesses and glories which shine dimly through the haze of metaphors and negations, by which alone a state of which we have no experience can be revealed to us; but these are secondary. The heaven of heaven is the possession of God the Father through the Son in the expanding spirits of His sons. The sovereign and filial position which Jesus Christ in His manhood occupies in that higher house, and which He shares with all those who by Him have received the adoption of sons, is the very heart and nerve of this great metaphor.

But I think we must go a step further than that, and recognise that in the image there is inherent the teaching that that glorious future is not merely a state, but also a place. Local associations are not to be divorced from the words; and although we can say but little about such a matter, yet everything in the teaching of Scripture points to the thought that howsoever true it may be that the essence of heaven is condition, yet that also heaven has a local habitation, and is a place in the great universe of God. Jesus Christ has at this moment a human body, glorified. That body, as Scripture teaches us, is somewhere, and where He is there shall also His servant be. In the context He goes on to tell us that 'He goes to prepare a place for us,' and though I would not insist upon the literal interpretation of such words, yet distinctly the drift of the representation is in the direction of localising, though not of materialising, the abode of the blessed. So I think we can say, not merely that *what* He is that shall also His

servants be, but that *where* He is there shall also His servants be. And from the representation of my text, though we cannot fathom all its depths, we can at least grasp this, which gives solidity and reality to our contemplations of the future, that heaven is a place, full of all sweet security and homelike repose, where God is made known in every heart and to every consciousness as a loving Father, and of which all the inhabitants are knit together in the frankest fraternal intercourse, conscious of the Father's love, and rejoicing in the abundant provisions of His royal House.

And then there is a second thought to be suggested from these words, and that is of the ample room in this great house. The original purpose of the words of my text, as I have already reminded you, was simply to soothe the fears of a handful of disciples.

There was room where Christ went for eleven poor men. Yes, room enough for them! but Christ's prescient eye looked down the ages, and saw all the unborn millions that would yet be drawn to Him uplifted on the Cross, and some glow of satisfaction flitted across His sorrow, as He saw from afar the result of the impending travail of His soul in the multitudes by whom God's heavenly house should yet be filled. 'Many mansions!' the thought widens out far beyond our grasp. Perhaps that upper room, like most of the roof-chambers in Jewish houses, was open to the skies, and whilst He spoke, the innumerable lights that blaze in that clear heaven shone down upon them, and He may have pointed to these. The better Abraham perhaps looked forth, like His prototype, on the starry heavens, and saw in the vision of the future those who through Him should receive the 'adoption of sons' and dwell for ever in the house of the Lord, 'so many as

the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.'

Ah! brethren, if we could only widen our measurement of the walls of the New Jerusalem to the measurement of that 'golden rod which the man, that is the angel,' as John says, applied to it, we should understand how much bigger it is than any of these poor sects and communities of ours here on earth. If we would lay to heart, as we ought to do, the deep meaning of that indefinite 'many' in my text, it would rebuke our narrowness. There will be a great many occupants of the mansions in heaven that Christian men here on earth—the most Catholic of them—will be very much surprised to see there, and thousands will find their entrance there that never found their entrance into any communities of so-called Christians here on earth.

That one word 'many' should deepen our confidence in the triumphs of Christ's Cross, and it may be used to heighten our own confidence as to our own poor selves. A chamber in the great Temple waits for each of us, and the question is, Shall we occupy it, or shall we not? The old Rabbis had a tradition which, like a great many of their apparently foolish sayings, covers in picturesque guise a very deep truth. They said that, however many the throngs of worshippers who came up to Jerusalem at the passover, the streets of the city and the courts of the sanctuary were never crowded. And so it is with that great city. There is room for all. There are throngs, but no crowds. Each finds a place in the ample sweep of the Father's house—like some of the great palaces that barbaric Eastern kings used to build, in whose courts armies might encamp, and the chambers of which were counted by

the thousand. And surely in all that ample accommodation, you and I may find some corner where we, if we will, may lodge for evermore.

I do not dwell upon subsidiary ideas that may be drawn from the expressions. 'Mansions' means places of permanent abode, and suggests the two thoughts, so sweet to travellers and toilers in this fleeting, labouring life, of unchangeableness and of repose. Some have supposed that the variety in the attainments of the redeemed, which is reasonable and scriptural, might be deduced from our text, but that does not seem to be relevant to our Lord's purpose.

One other suggestion may be made without enlarging upon it. There is only one other occasion in this Gospel in which the word here translated 'mansions' is employed, and it is this: 'We will come and make our abode with him.' Our mansion is in God; God's dwelling-place is in us. So ask yourselves, Have you a place in that heavenly home? When prodigal children go away from the father's house, sometimes a broken-hearted parent will keep the boy's room just as it used to be when he was young and pure, and will hope and weary through long days for him to come back and occupy it again. God is keeping a room for you in His house; do you see that you fill it.

II. In the next place, note here the sufficiency of Christ's revelation for our needs.

'If it were not so I would have told you.' He sets Himself forward in very august fashion as being the Revealer and Opener of that house for us. There is a singular tone about all our Lord's few references to the future—a tone of decisiveness; not as if He were speaking, as a man might do, that which he had thought out, or which had come to him but as if He

was speaking of what he had Himself beheld. 'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.' He stands like one on a mountain top, looking down into the valleys beyond, and telling His comrades in the plain behind Him what He sees. He speaks of that unseen world always as One who had been in it, and who was reporting experiences, and not giving forth opinions. His knowledge was the knowledge of One who dwelt with the Father, and left the house in order to find and bring back His wandering brethren. It was 'His own calm home, His habitation from eternity,' and therefore He could tell us with decisiveness, with simplicity, with assurance, all which we need to know about the geography of that unknown land—the plan of that, by us unvisited, house. Very remarkable, therefore, is it, that with this tone there should be such reticence in Christ's references to the future. The text implies the *rationale* of such reticence. 'If it were not so I would have told you.' I tell you all that you need, though I tell you a great deal less than you sometimes wish.

The gaps in our knowledge of the future, seeing that we have such a Revealer as we have in Christ, are remarkable. But my text suggests this to us—we have as much as we need. *I* know, and many of *you* know, by bitter experience, how many questions, the answers to which would seem to us to be such a lightening of our burdens, our desolated and troubled hearts suggest about that future, and how vainly we ply heaven with questions and interrogate the unreplying Oracle. But we know as much as we need. We know that God is there. We know that it is the Father's house. We know that Christ is in it. We know that the dwellers there are a family. We know that sweet security and

ample provision are there; and, for the rest, if we needed to have heard more, He would have told us.

'My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all;
And I shall be with Him.'

Let the gaps remain. The gaps are part of the revelation, and we know enough for faith and hope.

May we not widen the application of that thought to other matters than to our bounded and fragmentary conceptions of a future life? In times like the present, of doubt and unrest, it is a great piece of Christian wisdom to recognise the limitations of our knowledge and the sufficiency of the fragments that we have. What do we get a revelation for? To solve theological puzzles and dogmatic difficulties? to inflate us with the pride of *quasi*-omniscience? or to present to us God in Christ for faith, for love, for obedience, for imitation? Surely the latter, and for such purposes we have enough.

So let us recognise that our knowledge is very partial. A great stretch of wall is blank, and there is not a window in it. If there had been need for one, it would have been struck out. He has been pleased to leave many things obscure, not arbitrarily, so as to try our faith—for the implication of the words before us is that the relation between Him and us binds Him to the utmost possible frankness, and that all which we need and He can tell us He does tell—but for high reasons, and because of the very conditions of our present environment, which forbid the more complete and all-round knowledge.

So let us recognise our limitations. We know in

part, and we are wise if we affirm in part. Hold by the Central Light, which is Jesus Christ. 'Many things did Jesus which are not written in this book,' and many gaps and deficiencies from a human point of view exist in the contexture of revelation. 'But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ,' for which enough has been told us, 'and that, believing, ye may have life in His name.' If that purpose be accomplished in us, God will not have spoken, nor we have heard, in vain. Let us hold by the Central Light, and then the circumference of darkness will gradually retreat, and a wider sphere of illumination be ours, until the day when we enter our mansion in the Father's house, and then 'in Thy Light shall we see light'; and we shall 'know even as we are known.'

Let your Elder Brother lead you back, dear friend, to the Father's bosom, and be sure that if you trust Him and listen to Him, you will know enough on earth to turn earth into a foretaste of Heaven, and will find at last your place in the Father's house beside the Brother who has prepared it for you.

THE FORERUNNER

'... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'—JOHN xiv. 2, 3.

WHAT divine simplicity and depth are in these words! They carry us up into the unseen world, and beyond time; and yet a little child can lay hold on them, and mourning hearts and dying men find peace and sweetness in them. A very familiar image underlies them. It was customary for travellers in those old days to send some of their party on in advance, to find lodging

and make arrangements for them in some great city. Many a time one or other of the disciples had been 'sent before His face into every place where He Himself should come.' On that very morning two of them had gone in, at His bidding, from Bethany to make ready the table at which they were sitting. Christ here takes that office upon Himself. The emblem is homely, the thing meant is transcendent.

Not less wonderful is the blending of majesty and lowliness. The office which He takes upon Himself is that of an inferior and a servant. And yet the discharge of it, in the present case, implies His authority over every corner of the universe, His immortal life, and the sufficiency of His presence to make a heaven. Nor can we fail to notice the blending of another pair of opposites: His certainty of His impending death, and His certainty, notwithstanding and thereby, of His continual work and His final return, are inseparably interlaced here. How comes it that, in all His premonitions of His death, Jesus Christ never spoke about it as failure or as the interruption or end of His activity, but always as the transition to, and the condition of, His wider work? 'I go, and if I go I return, and take you to Myself.'

So, then, there are three things here, the departure with its purpose, the return, and the perfected union.

I. The Departure.

Our Lord's going away from that little group was a journey in two stages. Calvary was the first; Olivet was the second. He means by the phrase the whole continuous process which begins with His death and ends in His ascension. Both are embraced in His words, and each co-operates to the attainment of the great purpose.

He prepares a place for us by His death. The High Priest, in the ancient ritual, once a year was privileged to lift the heavy veil and pass into the darkened chamber, where only the light between the cherubim was visible, because he bore in his hand the blood of the sacrifice. But in our New Testament system the path into 'the holiest of all,' the realisation of the most intimate fellowship with heavenly things and communion with God Himself, are made possible, and the way patent for every foot, because Jesus has died. And as the communion upon earth, so the perfecting of the communion in the heavens. Who of us could step within those awful sanctities, or stand serene amidst the region of eternal light and stainless purity, unless, in His death, He had borne the sins of the world, and, having 'overcome' its 'sharpness' by enduring its blow, had 'opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers'?

Old legends tell us of magic gates that resisted all attempts to force them, but upon which, if one drop of a certain blood fell, they flew open. And so, by His death, Christ has opened the gates and made the heaven of perfect purity a dwelling-place for sinful men.

But the second stage of His departure is that which more eminently is in Christ's mind here. He prepares a place for us by His entrance into and His dwelling in the heavenly places. The words are obscure because we have but few others with which to compare them, and no experience by which to interpret them. We know so little about the matter that it is not wise to say much; but though there be vast tracts of darkness round the little spot of light, this should only make the spot of light more vivid and more precious. We

know little, but we know enough for mind and heart to rest upon. Our ignorance of the ways in which Christ by His ascension prepares a heaven for His followers should neither breed doubt nor disregard of His assurance that He does.

If Christ had not ascended, would there have been 'a place' at all? He has gone with a human body, which, glorified as it is, still has relations to space, and must be somewhere. And we may even say that His ascending up on high has made a place where His servants are. But apart from that suggestion, which, perhaps, is going beyond our limits, we may see that Christ's presence in heaven is needful to make it a heaven for poor human souls. There, as here (Scripture assures us), and throughout eternity as to-day, Jesus Christ is the Mediator of all human knowledge and possession of God. It is from Him and through Him that there come to men, whether they be men on earth or men in the heavens, all that they know, all that they hope, all that they enjoy, of the wisdom, love, beauty, peace, power, which flow from God. Take away from the heaven of the Christian expectation that which comes to the spirit through Jesus Christ, and you have nothing left. He and His mediation and ministration alone make the brightness and the blessedness of that high state. The very glories of all that lies beyond the veil would have an aspect appalling and bewildering to us, unless our Brother were there. Like some poor savages brought into a great city, or rustics into the presence of a king and his court, we should be ill at ease amidst the glories and solemnities of that future life unless we saw standing there our Kinsman, to whom we can turn, and who makes it possible for us to feel that it

is home. Christ's presence makes heaven the home of our hearts.

Not only did He go to prepare a place, but He is continuously preparing it for us all through the ages. We have to think of a double form of the work of Christ, His past work in His earthly life, and His present in His exaltation. We have to think of a double form of His present activity—His work with and in us here on earth, and His work for us there in the heavens. We have to think of a double form of His work in the heavens—that which the Scripture represents in a metaphor, the full comprehension of which surpasses our present powers and experiences, as being His priestly intercession; and that which my text represents in a metaphor, perhaps a little more level to our apprehension, as being His preparing a place for us. Behind the veil there is a working Christ, who, in the heavens, is preparing a place for all that love Him.

II. In the next place, note the Return.

The purpose of our Lord's departure, as set forth by Himself here, guarantees for us His coming back again. That is the force of the simple argumentation of my text, and of the pathetic and soothing repetition of the sweet words, 'I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself.' Because the departure had for its purpose the preparing of the place, therefore it is necessarily followed by a return. He who went away as the Forerunner has not done His work until He comes back, and, as Guide, leads those for whom He had prepared the place to the place which He had prepared for them.

Now that return of our Lord, like His departure, may

be considered as having two stages. Unquestionably the main meaning and application of the words is to that final and personal coming which stands at the end of history, and to which the hopes of every Christian soul ought to be steadfastly directed. He will 'so come in like manner as' He has gone. We are not to water down such words as these into anything short of a return precisely corresponding in its method to the departure; and as the departure was visible, corporeal, literal, personal, and local, so the return is to be visible, corporeal, literal, personal, local too. He is to come as He went, a visible Manhood, only throned amongst the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This is the aim that He sets before Him in His departure. He leaves in order that He may come back again.

And, oh, dear friends! remember—and let us live in the strength of the remembrance—that this return ought to be the prominent subject of Christian aspiration and desire. There is much about the conception of that solemn return, with all the convulsions that attend it, and the judgment of which it is preliminary, that may well make men's hearts chill within them. But for you and me, if we have any love in our hearts and loyalty in our spirits to that King, 'His coming' should be 'prepared as the *morning*,' and we should join in the great burst of rapture of many a psalm, which calls upon rocks and hills to break forth into singing, and trees of the field to clap their hands, because He cometh as the King to judge the earth. His own parable tells us how we ought to regard His coming. When the fig-tree's branch begins to supple, and the little leaves to push their way through the polished stem, then we know that summer is at hand.

His coming should be as the approach of that glorious, fervid time, in which the sunshine has tenfold brilliancy and power, the time of ripened harvests and matured fruits, the time of joy for all creatures that love the sun. It should be the glad hope of all His servants.

We have a double witness to bear in the midst of this as of every generation. One half of the witness stretches backwards to the Cross, and proclaims 'Christ has come'; the other reaches onwards to the Throne, and proclaims 'Christ will come.' Between these two high uplifted piers swings the chain of the world's history, which closes with the return, to judge and to save, of the Lord who came to die and has gone to prepare a place for us.

But do not let us forget that we may well take another point of view than this. Scripture knows of many comings of the Lord preliminary to, and in principle one with, His last coming. For nations all great crises of their history are 'comings of the Lord,' the Judge, and we are strictly in the line of Scripture analogy when, in reference to individuals, we see in each single death a true coming of the Lord.

That is the point of view in which we ought to look upon a Christian's death-bed. 'The Master is come, and calleth for thee.' Beyond all secondary causes, deeper than disease or accident, lies the loving will of Him who is the Lord of life and of death. Death is Christ's minister, 'mighty and beauteous, though his face be dark,' and he, too, stands amidst the ranks of the 'ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation.' It is Christ that says of one, 'I will that this man tarry,' and to another, 'Go!' and he goeth. But whensoever a Christian man

lies down to die, Christ says, 'Come!' and he comes. How that thought should hallow the death-chamber as with the print of the Master's feet! How it should quiet our hearts and dry our tears! How it should change the whole aspect of that 'shadow feared of man'! With Him for our companion, the lonely road will not be dreary; and though in its anticipation, our timid hearts may often be ready to say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,' if we have Him by our sides, 'even the night shall be light about us.' The dying martyr beneath the city wall lifted up his face to the heavens, and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' It was the echo of the Master's promise, 'I will come again, and receive you to Myself.'

III. Lastly, notice the Perfected Union.

The departure for such a purpose necessarily involved the return again. Both are stages in the process, which is perfected by complete union—'That where I am there ye may be also.'

Christ, as I have been saying, is Heaven. His presence is all that we need for peace, for joy, for purity, for rest, for love, for growth. To be 'with Him,' as He tells us in another part of these wonderful last words in the upper chamber, is to 'behold His glory.' And to behold His glory, as John tells us in his Epistle, is to be like Him. So Christ's presence means the communication to us of all the lustre of His radiance, of all the whiteness of His purity, of all the depth of His blessedness, and of a share in His wondrous dominion. His glorified manhood will pass into ours, and they that are with Him where He is will rest as in the centre and home of their spirits, and find Him all-sufficient. His presence is my Heaven.

That is almost all we know. Oh! it is more than all

we need to know. The curtain is the picture. It is because what is there transcends in glory all our present experience that Scripture can only hint at it and describe it by negations—such as ‘no night,’ ‘no sorrow,’ ‘no tears,’ ‘former things passed away’; and by symbols of glory and lustre gathered from all that is loftiest and noblest in human buildings and society. But all these are but secondary and poor. The living heart of the hope, and the lambent centre of the brightness, is, ‘So shall we ever be with the Lord.’

And it is enough. It is enough to make the bond of union between us in the outer court and them in the holy place. Parted friends will fix to look at the same star at the same moment of the night and feel some union; and if we from amidst the clouds of earth, and they from amidst the pure radiance of their heaven, turn our eyes to the same Christ, we are not far apart. If He be the companion of each of us, He reaches a hand to each, and, clasping it, the parted ones are united; and ‘whether we wake or sleep we live *together*,’ because we both live with Him.

Brother! Is Jesus Christ so much to you that a heaven which consists in nearness and likeness to Him has any attraction for you? Let Him be your Saviour, your Sacrifice, your Helper, your Companion. Obey Him as your King, love Him as your Friend, trust Him as your All. And be sure that then the darkness will be but the shadow of His hand, and instead of dreading death as that which separates you from life and love and action and joy, you will be able to meet it peacefully, as that which rends the thin veil, and unites you with Him who is the Heaven of heavens.

He has gone to prepare a place for us. And if we will let Him, He will prepare us for the place, and then

come and lead us thither. 'Thou wilt show me the path of life' which leads through death. 'In Thy presence is fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

THE WAY

'And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.'—JOHN xiv. 4-7.

OUR Lord has been speaking of His departure, of its purpose, of His return as guaranteed by that purpose, and of His servants' eternal and perfect reunion with Him. But even these cheering and calming thoughts do not exhaust His consolations, as they did not satisfy all the disciples' needs. They might still have said, 'Yes; we believe that You will come back again, and we believe that we shall be together; but what about the parenthesis of absence?' And here is the answer, or at least part of it: 'Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know'; or, if we adopt the shortened form which the Revised Version gives us, 'Whither I go ye know the way.'

When you say to a man, 'You know the way,' you mean 'Come.' And in these words there lie, as it seems to me, a veiled invitation to the disciples to come to Him before He came back for them, and the assurance that they, though separated, might still find and tread the road to the Father's house, and so be with Him still. They are not left desolate. The Christ who is absent is present as the path to Himself. And so the parenthesis is bridged across. Now in these verses we

have several large and important lessons which I think may best be drawn by simply seeking to follow their course.

I. Observe the disciples' unconscious knowledge.

Jesus Christ says: 'Ye know the way and ye know the goal.' One of them ventures flatly to contradict Him, and to traverse both assertions with a brusque and thorough-going negative. 'We do *not* know whither Thou goest,' says Thomas; 'how can we know the way?' He is the same man in this conversation that we find him in the interview before our Lord's journey to raise Lazarus, and in the interview after our Lord's resurrection. In all three cases he appears as mainly under the dominion of sense, as slow to apprehend anything beyond its limits, as morbidly melancholy and disposed to take the blackest possible view of things—a practical pessimist—and yet with a certain kind of frank outspokenness which half redeems the other characteristics from blame. He could not understand all the Lord's deep words just spoken. His mind was befogged and dimmed, and he blurts out his ignorance, knowing that the best place to carry it to is to the Illuminator who can make it light.

'We know *not* whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?' Was Jesus right? was Thomas right? or were they both right? The fact is that Thomas and all his fellows knew, after a fashion, but they did not know that they knew. They had heard much in the past as to where Christ was going. Plainly enough it had been rung in their ears over and over again. It had made some kind of lodgment in their heads, and, in that sense, they did know. It is this unused and unconscious knowledge of theirs to which Christ appeals.

and which He tries to draw out into consciousness and power when He says, 'You know whither I am going, and you know the road.' Is not that exactly what a patient teacher will do with some flustered child when he says to it: 'Take time! You know it well enough if you will only think'? So the Master says here: 'Do not be agitated and troubled in heart. Reflect, remember, overhaul your stores, and think what I have told you over and over again, and you will find that you *do* know whither I am going, and that you *do* know the way.'

The patient gentleness of the Master with the slowness of the scholars is beautifully exemplified here, as is also the method, which He lovingly and patiently adopts, of sending men back to consult their own consciousness as illuminated by His teaching, and to see whether there is not lying somewhere, unrecked of and unemployed in some dusty corner of their mind, a truth that only needs to be dragged out and cleaned in order to show itself for what it is, the all-sufficient light and strength for the moment's need.

The dialogue is an instance of what is true about us all, that we have in our possession truths given to us by Jesus Christ, the whole sweep and bearing of which, the whole majesty and power and illuminating capacity of which, we do not dream of yet. How much in our creeds lies dim and undeveloped! Time and circumstances and some sore agony of spirit are needed in order to make us realise the riches that we possess, and the certitudes to which our troubled spirits may cling; and the practice of far more patient, honest, profound meditation and reflection than finds favour with the average Christian man is needed, too, in order that the truths possessed may be possessed, and

that we may know what we know, and understand 'the things that are given to us of God.'

In all your creeds, there are large tracts that you, in some kind of a fashion, do believe; and yet they have no vitality in your consciousness nor power in your lives. And the Master here does with these disciples exactly what He is trying to do day by day with us, namely, fling us back on ourselves, or rather upon His revelation in us, and get us to fathom its depths and to walk round about its magnitudes, and so to understand the things that we say we believe.

All our knowledge is ignorance. Ignorance that confesses itself to Him is in the way of becoming knowledge. His light will touch the smoke and change it into red spires of flame. If you do not know, go to Him and say, 'Lord! I do not.' An accurate understanding of where the darkness lies is the first step to the light. We are meant to carry all our inadequate and superficial realisations of His truth into His presence, that, from Him, we may gain deeper knowledge, a firmer faith, and a more joyous certitude in His inexhaustible lessons. In every article and item of the Christian faith there is a transcendent element which surpasses our present comprehension. Let us be confident that the light will break; and let us welcome the new illumination when it comes, sure that it comes from God. Be not puffed up with the conceit that you know all. Be sure of this, that, according to the good old metaphor, we are but as children on the shore of the great ocean, gathering a few of the shells that it has washed to our feet, itself stretching boundless, and, thank God! sunlit, before us. 'Ye know the way.' 'Master, we know not the way'

II. Observe here, in the second place, our Lord's great self-revelation which meets this unconscious knowledge.

'Jesus saith unto him: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' Now it is quite plain, I think, from the whole strain of the context and the purpose of these words that the main idea in them is the first—'I am the Way.' And that is made more certain because of the last words of the verse, which, summing up the force of the three preceding assertions, dwell only upon the metaphor of the Way; 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' So that of these three great words, the Way, the Truth, the Life, we are to regard the second and the third as explanatory of the first. They are not co-ordinate, but the first is the more general, and the other two show how the first comes to be true. 'I am the Way' because 'I am the Truth and the Life.'

There are no words of the Master, perhaps, to which my previous remarks are more necessary to be applied than these. We know; and yet oh! what an overplus of glory and of depth is here that we do not know and never can know. The most fragmentary and inadequate grasp of them with heart and mind will bring light to the mind and quietness and peace to the heart; but the whole meaning of them goes beyond men and angels. We can only skim the surface and seek to shift back the boundaries of our knowledge a little further, and to embrace within its limits a little more of the broad land into which the words bring us. So just take a thought or two which may tend in that direction.

Note, then, as belonging to all three of these

clauses that remarkable '*I am.*' We show a way, Christ is it. We speak truth, Christ is it. Parents impart life, which they have received, Christ is Life. He separates Himself from all men by that representation that He is not merely the communicator or the teacher or the guide, but that He Himself is, in His own personal Being, Way, Truth, Life. He said that, when Calvary was within arm's-length. What did He think about Himself, and what should we think of Him?

And then note, further, that He sets forth His unique relation to the truth as being one ground on which He is the Way to God. He is the Truth in reference to the divine nature. That Truth, then, is not a mere matter of words. It is not only His speech that teaches us, but Himself that shows us God. His whole life and character, His personality, are the true representation within human conditions of the Invisible God; and when He says, '*I am the Way and the Truth,*' He is saying substantially the same thing as the great prologue of this Gospel says when it calls Him the Word and the Light of men, and as Paul says when he names Him '*the Image of the Invisible God.*' There is all the difference between talking about God and showing Him. Men reveal God by their words; Christ reveals Him by Himself and the facts of His life. The truest and highest representation of the divine nature that men can ever have is in the face of Jesus Christ.

I need only remind you in a sentence about other and lower applications of this great saying, which do not, as I think, enter into the purpose of the context. He is the Truth, inasmuch as, in the life and historical manifestation of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Scriptures, men find foundation truths of a moral and

spiritual sort. 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report,' He is these, and all true ethics is but the formulating into principles of all the facts of the life and character of Jesus Christ.

Further, my text says He is the Way because He is the Life. On the one side God is brought to all hearts, and in some real sense to our comprehension, by the life of Jesus Christ, and so He is the Way. But that is not enough. There must be an action upon us as well as an action having reference to the divine nature. God is brought to men by the manifestation in Christ; and we, the dead, are quickened by the communication of the Life. The one phrase points to all His work as a Revealer, the other points to all His work upon us as life-giving Spirit, a Quickener and an Inspirer. Dead men cannot walk a road. It is of no use to make a path if it starts from a cemetery. Christ taught that men apart from Him are dead, and that the only life that they can have by which they can be knit to God is the divine life which was in Himself, and of which He is the source and the principle for the whole world. He does not tell us here what yet is true, and what He abundantly tells in other parts of this great conversation, that the only way by which the life which He brings can be diffused and communicated is by His death. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.' He is the Life, and—paradox of mystery and yet fact which is the very heart and centre of His Gospel—His only way of giving His life to us is by giving up His physical life for us. He must die that He may be the life-spring for the world. The alabaster box must be broken if the ointment and its fragrance are to be poured out; and 'death is the

gate of life' in a deeper than the ordinary sense of the saying, inasmuch as the death of the Life which is Christ is the life of the death which we are.

And so, because, on the one hand, He brings a God to our hearts that we can love and trust, and because, on the other, He communicates to our spirits, dead in the only true death which is the separation from God by sin, the life by which we are knit to God, He is the Way to the Father.

And what about people that never heard of Him, to whom that Way has been closed, to whom that Truth has never been manifested, to whom that Life has never been brought? Ah! Christ has other ways of working than through His historical manifestation, for there is no truth more plainly taught in this great fourth Gospel than this, that that Light 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' The eternal Word works through all the earth, in ways beyond our ken, and wherever any man has, however imperfectly, felt after and grasped the thought of a Father in the heavens, there the Word, which is the Light of men, has wrought.

But for us to whom this Book has come, for what people call in bitter irony 'Christendom,' the law of my text rigidly applies, and it is being worked out all round us to-day. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' And here we are, in this England of ours, and in our sister nations on the continent of Europe and in America, face to face as I believe with this alternative—either Jesus Christ the Revealer of God and the Life of men, or an empty Heaven. And for you, individually, it is either—take Christ for the Way, or wander in the wilderness and forget your Father. It is either—take Christ for the Truth, or be given over to

the insufficiencies of mere natural, political, and intellectual truths, and the shows and illusions of time and sense. It is either—take Christ for your Life, or remain in your deadness, separate from God.

III. Lastly, we have here the disciples' ignorance and the new vision which dispels it.

'If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also, and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.' Our Lord accepts for the moment Thomas's standpoint. He supplements His former allegation of the disciples' knowledge with the admission of the ignorance which went with it as its shadow, and was only too sadly and plainly shown by their failure to discern in Him the manifestation of the Father. He has just told them that they did know what they thought they knew not; He now tells them that they did not know what they thought they knew so well, after so many years of companionship—even Himself. The proof that they did not is that they did not know the Father as revealed in Him, nor Him as revealing the Father. If they missed that, they missed everything; and for all they had known of His graciousness, were strangers to His truest Self. Their ignorance would turn out knowledge, if they would think, and their supposed knowledge would turn out ignorance.

The lesson for us is that the true test of the completeness and worth of our knowledge of Christ lies in its being knowledge of God the Father, brought near to us by Him. This saying puts a finger on the radical deficiency of all merely humanitarian views of Christ's person, however clearly they may see and admiringly extol the beauty of His character and the 'sweet reasonableness' of His wisdom. They all break down here, and are arraigned as so shallow and incomplete

that they do not deserve to be called knowledge of Him at all. If you know anything about Jesus Christ rightly, this is what you know about Him, that in Him you see God. If you have not seen God in Him, you have not got to the heart of the mystery. The knowledge of Christ which stops with the Man and the Martyr, and the Teacher and the beautiful, gentle Brother, is knowledge so partial that even He cannot venture to call it other than ignorance. Oh! brethren, do our conceptions of Him meet this test which He Himself has laid down, and can we say that, seeing Him, we see in Him God?

And then our Lord passes on to another thought, the new vision which at the moment was being granted to this unconscious ignorance that was passing into conscious knowledge. 'From henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.' We must give that 'from henceforth,' as a note of time, a somewhat liberal interpretation, and apply it to the whole series of utterances and deeds of which the words of our text are but a portion. And, if so, we come to this—it was in the wisdom, and the gentleness, and the deep truths of that upper chamber; it was in the agony and submission of Gethsemane; it was in the meek patience before the judges, and the silent acceptance of ignominy and shame; it was in the willing, loving endurance of the long hours upon the Cross, that Christ inaugurated the new stage in His revelation of God and in His life-giving to the world. And it is from thenceforth and thereby that in the man Jesus, men know and see 'the Father' as they never did before. The Cross and the Passion of Christ are the unveiling to the world of the heart of God; and by the side of that new vision the fairest and the loftiest

and the sweetest of Christ's former manifestations and utterances sink into comparative insignificance. It is the dying Christ that reveals the living God.

So, dear friends, He is your way to God. See that ye seek the Father by Him alone. He is your Truth; grapple Him to your hearts, and by patient meditation and continual faithfulness enrich yourselves with all the communicated treasures that you have already received in Him. He is your Life; cleave to Him, that the quick Spirit that was in Him may pass into you and make you victors over all deaths, temporal and eternal. Know Him as a Friend, not as a mere historical person, or with mere head-knowledge, for to know a friend is something far deeper than to know a truth. 'Acquaint thyself with Him and be at peace.' 'This is life eternal, to know,' with the knowledge which is life and possession, 'Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'

THE TRUE VISION OF GOD

'Philip saith unto Jesus, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9. Jesus saith unto Him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father, that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake.'—JOHN xiv. 8-11.

THE vehement burst with which Philip interrupts the calm flow of our Lord's discourse is not the product of mere frivolity or curiosity. One hears the ring of earnestness in it; and the yearnings of many years find voice. Philip had felt out of his depth, no doubt, in the profound teachings which our Lord had been giving, but His last words about seeing God set a

familiar chord vibrating. As an Old Testament believer he knew that Moses had once led the elders of Israel up to the mount where 'they saw the God of Israel,' and that to many others had been granted sensible manifestations of the divine presence. As a disciple he longed for some similar sign to confirm his faith. As a man he was conscious of the deep need which all of us have, whether we are conscious of it or not, for something more real and tangible than an unseeable and unknowable God. The peculiarities of Philip's temperament strengthened the desire. The first appearance that he makes in the Gospels is characteristically like this his last. To all Nathanael's objections he had only the reply, 'Come and see.' And here he says: 'Oh! if we could *see* the Father it would be enough.' He was one of the men to whom seeing is believing, and so he speaks.

His petition is childlike in its simplicity, beautiful in its trust, noble and true in its estimate of what men need. He longs to see God. He believes that Christ can show God; he is sure that the sight of God will satisfy the heart. These are errors, or truths, according to what is meant by 'seeing.' Philip meant a palpable manifestation, and so far he was wrong. Give the word its highest and its truest meaning, and Philip's error becomes grand truth. Our Lord gently, lovingly, and with only a hint of rebuke, answers the request, and seeks to disengage the error from the truth. His answer lies in the verses that we have read. Let us try to follow them, and, as we may, to skim their surface, for their depths are beyond us.

First of all, then, we have the sight of God in Christ as enough to answer men's longings. There is a world of sadness and tenderness, of suppressed pain

and of grieved affection, in the first words of our Lord's reply. 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?' He seldom names His disciples. When He does, there is a deep cadence of affection in the designation. This man was one of the first disciples, the little original band called by Christ Himself, and thus had been with Him all the time of His ministry, and the Master wonders with a gentle wonder that, before eyes that loved Him as much as Philip's did, His continual self-revelation had been made to so little purpose. In the answer, in its first portion, there lies the reiteration of the thoughts that I was trying to dwell upon in the last sermon, which, therefore, I may lightly touch now—viz., that the sight of Christ is the sight of God—'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'—and that not to know Christ as thus showing God is not to know Him at all—'Thou hast not known Me, Philip.' Further, there is the thought that the sight of God in Christ is sufficient, 'How sayest thou, Shew us the Father?' From all this we may gather some thoughts on which I lightly touch.

I. The first is, that we all do need to have God made visible to us.

The history of heathendom shows us that. In every land men have said, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.' And the highest cultivation of this highly cultivated and self-conscious twentieth century has not removed us from the same necessity that the rudest savage has, to have some kind of manifestation of the divine nature other than the dim and vague ones which are possible apart from the revelation of God in Christ. A God who is only the product of inferences from creation, or providence,

or the mysteries of history, or the wonders of my own inner life, the creature of logic or of reflection, is very powerless to sway and influence men. The limitations of our faculties and the boundlessness of our hearts both cry out for a God who is nearer to us than that, and whom we can see and love and be sure of. The whole world wants the making visible of divinity as its deepest want. And *your* heart and mind require it. Nothing else will ever stay our hunger, will ever answer our questioning minds.

Christ meets this need. How can you make wisdom visible? How can a man see love or purity? How do I see your spirit? By the deeds of your body. And the only way by which God can ever come near enough to men to be a constant power and a constant motive in their lives is by their seeing Him at work in a Man, who amongst them is His image and revelation. Christ's whole life is the making visible of the invisible God. He is the manifestation to the world of the unseen Father.

That vision is enough—enough for mind, enough for heart, enough for will. There is none else that is sufficient, but this is. ‘How sayest thou, Shew us the Father?’ If we can see God it suffices us. Then the mind settles down upon the thought of Him as the basis of all being, and of all change, and the heart can twine itself round Him, and the seeking soul folds its wings and is at rest, and the troubled spirit is quiet, and the accusing conscience is silent, and the rebellious will is subdued, and the stormy passions are quieted, and in the inner kingdom is a great peace. The sight of God in Christ brings rest to every heart, and, Oh! the absence of the vision is the true secret of all disquiet. We are troubled and careful, and

tossed from one stormy billow to another, and swept over by all the winds that blow, because we see not God, our Father, in the face of Jesus. 'Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,' is either a puerile petition, or the deepest and noblest prayer of the human heart. Blessed are they who have learned what it is to see, and know where that great sight is to be seen !

Our present knowledge and vision are far higher than that mere external symbol of God which this man wanted. The elders of Israel saw the God of Israel, but what they saw was but some symbolical manifestation of that which in itself is unseen and unattainable. But we who see God in Christ see no symbol but the Reality, and there is nothing more possible or to be hoped for here. Our present manifestation and sight of God in Christ does fall, in some ways unknown to us, beneath the bright hopes that we are entitled to cherish. But howsoever imperfect it may be, as measured against the perfection of the vision when we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known, it is enough, and more than enough, for all the questionings and desires of our hungering spirits.

II. Our Lord goes on to a further answer, and points to the divine and mutual indwelling by which this sight is made possible.

'Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.' There are here, mainly, two things, Christ's claim to the oneness of unbroken communion, and Christ's claim, consequently, to the oneness of complete co-operation. 'I am in the Father' indicates the suppression of all independent and there-

fore rebellious will, consciousness, thought and action; 'And the Father in Me' indicates the influx into that perfectly filial Manhood of the whole fullness of God in unbroken, continuous, gentle, deep flow. These are the two sides of this great mystery on which neither wisdom nor reverence lead us to dilate; and they combine to express the closest and most uninterrupted blending, interpenetration, and communion.

And then follows the other claim, that because of this continuous mutual indwelling there is perfect co-operation. This is also stated in terms corresponding to the preceding double representation. 'The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself,' corresponds to, 'I am in the Father.' 'The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works,' corresponds to 'The Father in Me.' The two put together teach us this, that by reason of that mysterious and ineffable union of communion, Jesus Christ in all His words and in all His works is the perfect instrument of the divine will, so that His words are God's words, and His works are God's works; so that, when He speaks, His gentle wisdom, His loving sympathy, His melting tenderness, His authoritative commands, His prophetic threatenings, are the speech of God, and that when He acts, whether it be by miracle or in the ordinary deeds of His life, what we see is God working before our eyes as we never see Him in any human being.

And from all this follow just two or three considerations which I name. Note the absolute absence of any consciousness on Christ's part of the smallest deflection or disharmony between Himself and the Father. Two triangles laid on each other are in every line, point, and angle absolutely coincident. That humanity is

capable of receiving the whole inflow of God, and that indwelling God is perfectly expressed in the humanity. There is no trace of a consciousness of sin. Everything that Jesus Christ said He knew to be God's speaking; everything that He did He knew to be God's acting. There were no barriers between the two. Jesus Christ was conscious of no separation—not the thinnest film of air between these Two who adhered and inhered so closely and so continuously. It is an awful assertion.

Now I pray you to ask yourselves the question: If this was what Christ said, what did He think of Himself? And is this a Man, like the rest of us, with blotches and sins, with failures to embody His own ideas, and still more to carry out in life the will that He knows to be God's will? Is this a man like other men who thus speaks to us? If Jesus had this consciousness, either He was ludicrously, tragically, blasphemously, utterly mistaken and untrustworthy, or He is what the Church in all ages has confessed Him to be, 'the Everlasting Son of the Father.'

III. Lastly, our Lord further sets before us the faith to which He invites us on the ground of His union with, and revelation of, God.

'Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very works' sake.' Observe that the verb at the beginning of this last verse of our text passes into a plural form. Our Lord has done with Philip especially, and speaks now to all who hear Him, and to us amongst the rest of His auditors. He bids us *believe* Him, and believe something about Him on the strength of His own testimony, or, in default of that, and as second best, believe Him on the testimony of His works. I gather

together what I have to say about this point into three remarks.

The true bond of union between men and Jesus Christ is faith. We have to trust, and that is better than sight. We have to trust *Him*. He is the personal Object of our faith. In all faith there is what I may call a moral and a voluntary element. A man believes a proposition because it is forced upon him, and his intelligence is obliged to accept it. A man trusts Christ because he *will* trust Him, and the moral and voluntary element carries us far beyond the mere intellectual conception of faith as the assent to a set of theological propositions. Faith really is the outgoing of the whole man—heart, will, intellect, and all—to a person whom it grasps. But the Christ that you and I have to trust is the Christ as He Himself has declared Himself to us. ‘Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.’ There is a bastard, mutilated kind of thing that calls itself Christian faith, that goes about the world in this generation, which believes in Jesus Christ in all sorts of beautiful ways, but it will not believe in Him as the Personal Revelation and making visible of the unseen God. Jesus Christ Himself tells us here that that is not the kind of faith which He invites us to put forth. If we put forth that only, we have not yet come to understand Him. Oh, dear friends! Christ as here declared to us by Himself is the only Christ to whom it is right to give our trust. If He be not God manifest in the flesh, I ought not to trust Him. I may admire Him as a historical personage; I may reverence Him for His wisdom and beauty; I may even in some vague way have a kind of love to Him. But what in the name of common sense shall I trust Him for? And why should

He call upon me to exercise faith in Him unless He stand before me as the adequate Object of a man's trust—namely, the manifest God?

And then, further, note that believing in the sense of *trusting* is seeing and knowing. Philip said, 'Shew us the Father.' Christ answers, 'Believe, and thou dost see.' If you look back upon the previous verses of this chapter, you will find that in the earlier portion of them the key-word is 'know'; that in the second portion of them the key-word is 'see'; that in this portion of them the key-word is 'believe.' The world says, 'Ah! seeing is believing.' The Gospel says, 'Believing is seeing.' The true way to knowledge, and to a better vision than the uncertain vision of the eye, is faith. In certitude and in directness, the knowledge of God that we have through faith in the Christ whom our eyes have never seen is far ahead of the certitude and the directness that attach to our mere bodily sight; and so the key to all divine knowledge, and the sure road to the truest vision of God, is faith.

Further, faith, even if based upon lower than the highest grounds, is still faith, and acceptable to Him: 'Or else believe Me for the very works' sake.' The 'works' are mainly, I suppose, though not exclusively, His miracles. And if so, we are here taught that, if a man has not come to that point of spiritual susceptibility in which the image of Jesus Christ lays hold upon His heart and obliges him to trust Him and to love Him, there are yet the miracles to look at; and the faith that grasps them, and by help of that ladder climbs to Him, though it be second best, is yet real. The evidence of miracles is subordinate, and yet it is valid and true. So our Lord contradicts both the exaggerations of past generations and the exaggerations

tions of this, and neither asserts that the great reason for faith is miracles, nor that miracles are of no use at all. Former centuries in the Christian Church reiterated the former exaggeration, and thus partly provoked the exaggeration of this day. Let us keep the middle course: there is a better way of coming to Christ than through the gate of miracles, and that is that He should stamp His own divine sweetness and elevation upon our minds and hearts. But if we have not reached that point, do not let us kick away the ladder that may help us to it. 'Believe Him for the very works' sake.' Imperfect faith may be the highway to perfection. Let us follow the light, if it be but a far-off glimmer, sure that it will bring us into noon-tide day if we are faithful to its leading.

On the other hand, dear friends, let us remember that no faith avails itself of all the treasures laid up for it, which does not lay hold upon Christ in the character in which He presents Himself. The only adequate, worthy trust in Him is the trust which grasps Him as the Incarnate God and Saviour. Only such a faith does justice to His own claim. Only such a faith is the sure path to vision and to knowledge. Only such a faith draws down the blessing of a questioning intellect answered, a hungry heart satisfied, a conscience, accusing and prophetic of a judgment to come, cleansed and purified.

To each of us Christ addresses His merciful invitation, Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.' May we all answer, 'We believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!'

CHRIST'S WORKS AND OURS

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I ~~do~~ shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. 13. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14. If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it.'—JOHN xiv. 12-14.

I HAVE already pointed out in a previous sermon that the key-word of this context is 'Believe!' In three successive verses we find it, each time widening in its application. We have first the question to the single disciple: 'Philip! believest thou not?' We have then the invitation addressed to the whole group: 'Believe Me!' And here we have a wholly general expression referring to all who, in every generation and corner of the world, put their trust in Christ, and extending the sunshine of this great promise to whosoever believeth in Him. Our Lord has pointed to *believing* as the great antidote to a troubled heart, as the sure way of knowing the Father, as the better substitute for sight; and now here He opens before us still more wonderful prerogatives and effects of faith. His words carry us up into lofty and misty regions, where we can neither breathe freely nor see clearly, except as we hold to His words. Therefore He prefaces them with His 'Verily, verily!' bidding us listen to them with sharpened attention as the disclosure of something wonderful, and receive them with unfaltering confidence, on His authority, however marvellous and otherwise undiscoverable they may be.

What is it, then, that He thus commends to our acceptance? If I may venture a paraphrase which may at least have the advantage of being cast into less familiar words, it is just this, that because of, and after, Christ's departure from earth, He will, in

response to prayer, work upon faithful souls in such a fashion as that they will do what He did, and in some sense will do even more.

I. We have here the continuous work of the exalted Lord for and through His servants.

These disciples, of course, were trembling and oppressed with the thought that the departure of Jesus would be the end of His ceaseless activity for them, on which they had depended implicitly for so long. Henceforward, whatever distress or need might come, that Voice would be silent, and that Hand motionless, and they would be left to face every storm, uncompanied and uncounselled. Some of us know how dreary such experience makes life, and we can understand how these men shrank from the prospect. Christ's words give strength to meet that trial, and not only tell them that after He is gone they will be able to do what they cannot do now, and what He used to do for them, but that *in* them He will work as well as *for* them, and be the power of their action, after He has departed.

For, notice the remarkable connection of the words with which we are dealing. 'He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall *he* do,' and the ground of that is 'because I go to My Father,' and whatsoever the believer 'shall ask, *I* will do.'

So, then, there are here two very distinct paths on which Christ represents to us that His future activity will travel; the one, that of doing for us, in response to our prayers; the other that of working on us and in us, so that our acts are His and His acts are ours. We may look at these two for a moment separately.

Here, then, there is clearly stated this great thought

that Christ's removal from the world is not the end of His activity in the world and on material things, but that, absent, He still is a present power, and having passed through death, and been removed from sense, He can still operate upon the things round us, and move these according to His will. We are not to water down such words as these into any such thought as that the continuous influence of the memory and history of His past will be a present power in all ages.

That is true, gloriously and uniquely true, but that is not the truth which He speaks here. Over and above that perpetual influence of past recorded work, there is the present influence of His present work, and to-day He is working as truly as He wrought when on earth. One form of His work was finished on Calvary, as His dying breath proclaimed; but there is another work of Christ in the midst of the ages, moving the pawns on the chessboard of the world, and presiding over the fortunes of the solemn conflict, which will not be ended until that day when the angel voices shall chant, 'It is done! The kingdoms of the world are the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.' The living Christ works by a true forth-putting of His own present power upon material things, and amidst the providences of life. And therefore these disciples were not to be cast down as if His work for them were ended.

Now it is clear, of course, that such words as these do demand for their vindication something perfectly unique and solitary in the nature and person of Jesus Christ. All other men's work is cut in twain by death. 'This man, having served his generation by the will of God, fell on sleep and was gathered to his fathers and saw corruption,' that is the epitaph over the

greatest thinkers, statesmen, heroes, poets, the epitaph for the tenderest and most hopeful. Father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, all cease to act when they die, and though thunders should break, they are silent and can help no more. But Christ is living to-day, and working all around us.

Now, brethren, it is of the last importance for the joyousness of our Christian lives, and for the courage of our conflict with sorrow and sin, that we should give a very prominent place in our creeds, and our hearts, to this great truth of a living Christ. What a joyful sense of companionship it brings to the solitary, what calmness of vision in contemplating the complications and calamities of the world's history, if we grasp firmly the assurance that the living Christ is actually working by the present forth-putting of His power in the world to-day!

But that is not all. There is another path on which our Lord shows us here a glimpse of His working, not only for us, but on and in and therefore through us, so that the deeds that we do in faith that rests upon Him are in one aspect His, and in another ours.

'The works that I do shall He do also'; because 'whatsoever ye shall ask I will do it.'

We have not to think only of a Lord whose activity for us, beneficent and marvellous as it is, was finished in the misty past upon the Cross, nor have we only to think of a Lord whose activity for us, mighty and comforting as it is to all the solitary and struggling, is wrought as from the heights of the heavens, but we have to think of One who is beside us and in us and knows the hidden paths that no eye sees, and no foot but His can tread, into the inmost recesses of our souls, and there can enter as King and righteousness,

as life and strength. This is the deepest of the lessons that He would teach us here. 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' and through me, if I keep close to Him, will work mightily in forms that my poor manhood could never have reached. The emblem of the vine and the branches, and the other emblem of the house and its inhabitants, and the other of the head and the members, all point to this one same thing which shallow and unspiritual men call 'mystical,' but which is the very heart of the Christian prerogative and the anchor of the Christian hope. Christ in us is our present righteousness and our hope of a future glory.

And now mark that a still more solemn and mysterious aspect of this union of Jesus Christ and the believer is given, since it is set forth as resulting in our doing Christ's works, and Christ doing ours; and therein is paralleled with the yet more wonderful and ineffable union between the Father and the Son. It is no accident that in one clause He says, 'I am in the Father, and the Father in Me. The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works'; and that in the next He says, 'The works that I do shall he do also'; and so bids us see in that union between the Father and the Son, and in that consequent union of co-operation between Him and His Father, a pattern after which our union with Him is to be moulded, both as regards the closeness of its intimacy and as regards the resulting manifestations in life. Christ is in us and we in Christ in some measure as the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son. And the works that we do He does in some fashion that faintly echoes and shadows the perfect

co-operation of the Father and the Son in the works that the Christ did upon the earth.

All the doings of a Christian man, if done in faith, and holding by Christ, are Christ's doings, inasmuch as He is the life and the power which does them all. And Christ's deeds are reproduced and perpetuated in His humble follower, inasmuch as the life which is imparted will unfold itself according to its own kind; and he that loves Christ will be changed into His likeness, and become a partaker of His Spirit. So let us curb all self-dependence and self-will, that that mighty tide may flow into us; and let us cast from us all timidity, distrust, and gloom, and be strong in the assurance that we have a Christ living in the heavens to work for us, and living within us to work through us.

There is no record of the Ascension in John's Gospel, but these words of my text unveil to us the inmost meaning of that Ascension, and are in full accord with the great picture which one of the Evangelists has drawn—a picture in two halves, which yet are knit together into one. 'So then, after He had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God; and they went forth and preached everywhere.' What a contrast between the two—the repose above, the toil below! Yes! But the next words knit them together—'The Lord also working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.'

II. Note, in the next place, the greater work of the servants on and for whom the Lord works. 'Greater works than these shall he do.' Is, then, the servant greater than his Lord, and he that is sent greater than He that sent him? Not so, for what

soever the servant does is done because the Lord is with and in him, and the contrast that is drawn between the works that Christ does on earth and the greater works that the servant is to do hereafter is, properly and at bottom, the contrast between Christ's manifestations in the time of His earthly limitation and humiliation, and His manifestations in the time of His Ascension and celestial glory.

We need not be afraid that such great words as these in any measure trench on the unique and unapproachable character of the earthly work of Christ in its two aspects, which are one—of Revelation and Redemption. These are finished, and need no copy, no repetition, no perpetuation, until the end of time. But the work of objective Revelation, which was completed when He ascended, and the work of Redemption which was finished when He rose—these require to be applied through the ages. And it is in regard to the application of the finished work of Christ to the actual accomplishment of its contemplated consequences, that the comparison is drawn between the limited sphere and the small results of Christ's work upon earth, and the worldwide sweep and majestic magnitude of the results of the application of that work by His servants' witnessing work. The wider and more complete spiritual results achieved by the ministration of the servants than by the ministration of the Lord is the point of comparison here. And I need only remind you that the poorest Christian who can go to a brother soul, and by word or life can draw that soul to a Christ whom it apprehends as dying for its sins and raised for its glorifying, does a mightier thing than it was possible for the Master to do by life or lip whilst He was here upon earth. For

the Redemption had to be completed in act before it could be proclaimed in word; and Christ had no such weapon in His hands with which to draw men's souls, and cast down the high places of evil, as we have when we can say, 'We testify unto you that the Son of God hath died for our sins, and is raised again according to the Scriptures.' Nor need I do more than remind you of the comparison, so exalting for His humility and so humbling for our self-exaltation, between the narrow sphere in which His earthly ministrations had to operate and the worldwide scope which is given to His servants. 'He laid His hands on a few sick folk, and healed them'; and at the end of His life there were one hundred and twenty disciples in Jerusalem and five hundred in Galilee, and you might have put them all into this chapel and had ample room to spare. That was all that Jesus Christ had done; while to-day and now the world is being leavened and the kingdoms of the earth are beginning to recognise His name. 'Greater works than these shall he do' who lets Christ in him do all His works.

III. Lastly, notice the conditions on which the exalted Lord works for and on His servants.

These are two, faith and prayer.

'He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also.' Faith, the simple act of loving trust in Jesus Christ, opens the door of our hearts and natures for the entrance of all His solemn Omnipotence, and makes us possessors of it. It is the condition, and the only condition, and plainly the indispensable condition, of possessing this divine Christ's power, that we should trust ourselves to Him that gives it. And if we do, then we shall not trust in vain, but to us there will come power that will surpass our desire.

and fill us with its own rejoicing and pure energy. Faith will make us like Christ. Faith is intensely practical. 'He that believeth shall do.' It is no mere cold assent to a creed which is utterly impotent to operate upon men's acts, no mere hysterical emotion which is utterly impotent to energise into nobilities of service and miracles of consecration, but it is the affiance of the whole nature which spreads itself before Him and prays, 'Fill my emptiness and vitalise me with Thine own Spirit.' That is the faith which is ever answered by the inrush of the divine power, and the measure of our capacity of receiving is the measure of His gift to us.

So if Christian individuals and Christian communities are impotent, or all but impotent, there is no difficulty in understanding why. They have cut the connection, they have shut the tap. They lack faith; and so their power is weakness. 'Why could we not cast him out?' said they, perplexed when they had no need to be. 'Why could you not cast him out? Because you do not believe that I, working in you, can cast him out. That is why; and the only why.' Let us learn that the secret of Christians' weakness is the weakness of their Christian faith.

And the other condition is prayer. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name I will do it,' and He repeats it, for confirmation and for greater emphasis. 'If ye shall ask anything in My name,' or, as perhaps that clause ought to be read with some versions, 'If ye shall ask *Me* anything in My name I will do it.'

Three points may be named here. Our power depends upon our prayer. God's and Christ's fullness and willingness to communicate do *not* depend upon our prayer. But our capacity to receive of that fullness, and

so the possibility of its communication to us, do depend upon our prayer. 'We have not because we ask not.'

The power of our prayer depends upon our consciousness with the revealed Christ. 'If ye shall ask in My name,' says He. And people think they have fulfilled the condition when, in a mechanical and external manner, they say, as a formula at the end of petitions that have been all stuffed full of self-will and selfishness, 'for Christ's sake. Amen!' and then they wonder they do not get them answered! Is that asking in Christ's name?

Christ's name is the revelation of Christ's character, and to do a thing in the name of another person is to do it as His representative, and as realising that in some deep and real sense—for the present purpose at all events—we are one with Him. And it is when we know ourselves to be united to Christ and one with Him, and representative in a true fashion of Himself, as well as when, in humble reliance on His work for us and His loving heart, we draw near, that our prayer has power, as the old divines used to say, 'to move the Hand that moves the world,' and to bring down a rush of blessing upon our heads. Prayer in the name of Christ is hard to offer. It needs much discipline and watchfulness; it excludes all self-will and selfishness. And if, as my text tells us, the end of the Son's working is the glory of the Father, that same end, and not our own ease or comfort, must be the end and object of all prayer which is offered in His name. When we so pray we get an answer. And the reason why such multitudes of prayers never travel higher than the roof, and bring no blessings to him who prays, is because they are not prayers in Christ's name.

Prayer in His name will pass into prayer to Him. As He not obscurely teaches us here (if we adopt the reading to which I have already referred), He has an ear to hear such requests, and He wields divine power to answer. Surely it was not blasphemy nor any diversion of the worship due to God alone, when the dying martyr outside the city wall cried and said, '*Lord Jesus! receive my spirit.*' Nor is it any departure from the solemnest obligations laid upon us by the unity of the divine nature, nor are we bringing idolatrous petitions to another than the Father, when we draw near to Christ and ask Him to give us that which He gives as the Father's gift, and to work on us that which the Father that dwelleth in Him works through Him for us.

Trust yourselves to Christ, and let your desires be stilled, to listen to His voice in you, and let that voice speak. And then, dear brethren, we shall be lifted above ourselves, and strength will flow into us, and we shall be able to say, 'I can do all things, through the Christ that dwells in me and makes me strong.' And just as the glad, sunny waters of the incoming tide fill the empty places of some oozy harbour, where all the ships are lying as if dead, and the mud is festering in the sunshine, so into the slimy emptiness of our corrupt hearts there will pour the flashing sunlit wave, the ever fresh rush of His power; and 'everything will live whithersoever it cometh,' and we shall be able to say in all humility, and yet in glad recognition of Christ's faithfulness to this, His transcendent promise, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' 'because the life which I live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God.'

LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.'—JOHN xiv. 15.

As we have seen in former sermons, the keyword of the preceding context is 'Believe!' and that word passes now into 'Love.' The order here is the order of experience. There is first the believing gaze upon the Christ as He is revealed—the image of the invisible God. That kindles love, and prompts to obedience.

There is another very beautiful and subtle link of connection between these words and the preceding. Our Lord has just been saying, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do.' Is the parallel wholly accidental or fanciful between the Lord who does as the servant asks and the servant who is to do as the Lord commands? On both sides there is love delighting to be set in motion by a message from the other side. On the one part there is love supreme which commands and delights to be asked, on the other part there is love dependent, which asks and delights to be commanded; and though the gulf between the two is great, and the difference between Christ's law and our petitions is infinite, yet there is an analogy.

I pause on these words, though they are introduced here only as the basis of the great promise which follows, because they open out into such wide fields. They contain the all-sufficient law of Christian conduct. They contain the one motive adequate to bring that law into realisation. They disclose the very roots of Christian morality, and part of the secret of Christ's unique power and influence amongst men. They come with a message of encouragement to all souls despairing of being able to do that which they would, and of

freedom to all men burdened with a crowd of minute and external regulations. 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments'—there are three points to be dwelt upon here—namely, the all-sufficient ideal or guide of life, the all-powerful motive which Christ brings to bear, and the all-subduing gaze of faith by which that motive is brought into action.

I. We have here the all-sufficient ideal or guide for life.

Jesus Christ is not speaking merely to that little handful of men in the upper chamber, but to all generations and to all lands, to the end of time and round the world. The authoritative tone which He assumes here is very noteworthy. He speaks as Jehovah spoke from Sinai, and quotes the very words of the old law when He speaks of 'keeping My commandments.' There are distinctly involved in this quite incidental utterance of Christ's two startling things—one the assumption of His right to impose His will upon every human being, and the other His assumption that His will contains the all-sufficient directory for human conduct.

What, then, are His commandments? Those which He spoke are plain and simple; and people who wish to pick holes in the greatness of Christ's work in the world tell us that you can match almost all His precepts up and down amongst moralists and philosophers, and they crow very loud if, scratching amongst Rabbinical dust-heaps, they find something that looks like anything that He once said. Be it so! What does that matter? Christ's 'commandments' are Christ Himself. This is the originality and uniqueness of Christ as a moral Teacher, that He says, not 'Do this, that, and the other thing,' but 'Copy Me.'

'Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' His commandments are Himself; and the sum of them all is this—a character perfectly self-oblivious, and wholly penetrated and saturated with joyful, filial submission to the Father, and uttermost and entire giving Himself away to His brethren. That is Christ's commandment which He bids us keep, and His law is to be found in His life.

And then, if that be so, what a change passes on the aspect of law, when we take Christ as being our living embodiment of it! Everything that was hard, repellent, far-off, cold, vanishes. We have no longer 'tables of stone,' but 'fleshy tables of the heart'; and the Law stands before us, a Being to be loved, to be clung to, to be trusted, and whom it is blessedness to know and perfection to resemble. The rails upon which the train travels may be rigid, but they mean safety, and they carry men smoothly into otherwise inaccessible lands. So the life of Jesus Christ brought to us is the firm and plain track along which we are to travel; and all that was difficult and hard in the cold thought of *duty* becomes changed into the attraction of a living Pattern and Example. This living and breathing and loving commandment is all-sufficient for every detail and complexity of human life. It is so by the confession of believers and of unbelievers, by the joyful confession of the one, and by the frank acknowledgment of many of the others. Listen to one of them. 'Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique Figure, not more unlike all His predecessors than all His followers. . . . Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in selecting this Man as the ideal Representative and Guide of humanity; nor even now

would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.'

It is enough for conduct, it is enough for character, it is enough in all perplexities of conflicting duties, that we listen to and obey the voice that says, 'Keep My commandments.'

II. Now note, secondly, the all-powerful motive.

Probably my text is best understood as the Revised Version understands it, which reads, 'If ye love Me, *ye will* keep My commandments,' making it an assurance and not an injunction. Christ speaks with the calm confidence that love to Him will have power enough to sway the life. His utterance here is not the addition of another commandment to the list, but rather the pointing out of how they may all be kept.

The principle that underlies these words, then, is this, that love is the foundation of obedience, and obedience is the sure outcome and result of love. That is true in regard to those lower forms of love, which may teach us something of the operation of the higher. We all know that love which is real, and not simply passion and selfishness with a mask on, delights most chiefly in knowing and conforming to the will of the beloved, and that there is nothing sweeter than to be commanded by the dear voice and to obey for dear love's sake. And you have only to take that which is the experience of every true heart, in a thousand sweet ways in daily life, and to lift it into the higher region, and to transfer it to the bond that unites us with Jesus Christ, to see that He has invoked no illusory, but an omnipotent power when He has rested the whole force of His transforming and sanctifying

energy upon this one principle, 'If ye love Me, the Lawgiver, ye will keep the commandments of My Law.'

That is exactly what distinguishes and lifts the morality of the Gospel above all other systems. The worst man in the world knows a great deal more of his duty than the best man does. It is not for want of knowledge that men go to the devil, but it is for want of power or will to live their knowledge. And what morality fails to do, with its clearest utterances of human duty, Christ comes and does. The one law is like the useless proclamations posted up in some rebellious district, where there is no army to back them, and the king's authority from whom they come is flouted. The other law gets itself obeyed. Such is the difference between the powerless morality of the world and the commandment of Jesus Christ. Here is the road plain and straight. What matters that, if there is no force to draw the cart along it? There might as well be no road at all. Here stand all your looms, polished and in perfect order, but there is no steam in the boilers; and so there is no motion, and nothing is woven. What we want is not law, but power, and what the Gospel gives us, and stands alone in giving us, is not merely the knowledge of the will of God, and the clear revelation of what we ought to be, but the power to become it.

Love does that, and love alone. That strong force brought into action in our hearts will drive out from thence all rivals, all false and low things. The true way to cleanse the Augean stables, as the old myth has it, was to turn the river into them. It would have been endless work to wheel out the filth in wheelbarrows loaded by spades: turn the stream in, and it will sweep away all the foulness. When the Ark

comes into the Temple, Dagon lies, a mutilated stump, upon the threshold. When Christ comes into my heart, then all the obscene and twilight-loving shapes that lurked there, and defiled it, will vanish like ghosts at cock-crowing before His calm and pure Presence. He, and He alone, entering my heart by the portals of my love, will coerce my evil and stimulate my good. And if I love Him, I shall keep His commandments.

Now, brethren, here is a plain test and a double-barrelled one, which tries both our love and our obedience with a sharp touchstone. 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments.' That implies, first, that there is no love worth calling so which does not keep the commandment. All the emotional and the mystic, and the so-called higher parts of Christian experience, have to be content to submit to this plain test—do they help us to live as Christ would have us, and that because He would have us? Love to Him that does not keep His commandments is either spurious or dangerously feeble. The true sign of its presence in the heart and the noblest of its operations is not to be found in high-pitched expressions of fervid emotion, nor even in the sacred joys of solitary communion, but in its making us, while in the rough struggle of daily life, and surrounded by trivial tasks, live near Him, and by Him, and for Him, and like Him. If I live so, I love Him; if not, not. Not that I mean to say that in regard to each individual action of a Christian man's life there must be the conscious presence of reference to the supreme love, but that each individual action of the life ought to come from a character of which that reference to the supreme love is the very formative principle and foundation.

The colouring matter put in at the fountain will dye every drop of the stream; and they whose inmost hearts are tinged and tintured with the sweet love of Jesus Christ, from their hearts will go forth issues of life all coloured and moulded thereby. Test your Christian love by your practical obedience.

And, on the other hand, there is no obedience worth calling so which is not the child of love; and all the multitude of right things which Christians do without that motive are made short work of by that consideration. Obedience which is formal, mechanical, matter-of-course, without the presence in it of a loving submission of the will; obedience which is reluctant, calculated, forced upon us by dread, imitated from others—all that is nothing; and Jesus Christ does not count it as obedience at all. This is a sieve with very small meshes, and there will be a great deal of rubbish left in it after the shaking. ‘If ye love Me, keep My commandments.’ The ‘keeping of My commandments’ which has not ‘love to Me’ underlying it is no keeping at all.

III. And so, lastly, notice the all-subduing gaze.

That is not included in my text, but it is necessary in order to complete the view of the forces to which Jesus Christ here entrusts the hallowing of life and the sanctifying of our nature; and we are led to refer to it by what I have already pointed out; the connection between the ‘love’ of my text and the ‘believe’ of the preceding verses. I can fancy a man saying, ‘Keep His commandments? Woe is me! How am I to keep?’ The answer is ‘Love.’ And I can fancy him saying ‘Love?’ Yes! ‘And how am I to love? I cannot get up love at the word of command, or by any voluntary effort.’ And the answer comes again,

'Believe!' Trust Christ, and you will love Him. Love Him and you will do His will. And then the question comes again, 'Believe what?' And the answer comes, 'Believe that He is the Son of God who died for you.'

Nothing else will kindle a man's love than the faithful contemplation and grasp of Christ in that character and aspect. Only the redeeming Christ affords a reasonable ground for our love to Him. Here is a dead man, dead for nineteen centuries, expecting you and me to have towards Him a vivid personal affection which will influence our conduct and our character. What right has He to expect that? There is only one reasonable ground upon which I may be called to love Jesus Christ, and that is that He died for me, and such a love towards such a Christ is the only thing which will wield power sufficient to guide, to coerce, to restrain, to constrain, and to sustain my weak, wayward, rebellious, and sluggish will. All other emotions of so-called admiration and worship and reverence and affection for Jesus Christ are apt to be tepid, but this one has power and warmth in it.

Here is a unique fact in the history of the world, that not only did He make this astounding claim upon all subsequent generations; but that all subsequent generations have responded to it, and that to-day there are millions of men who love Jesus Christ with a love warm, personal, deep, powerful—the spring of all their goodness and the Lord of their lives. Why do they? For one reason only. Because they believe that He died for them individually, and that He lives an ascended yet ever-present Helper and Lover of their souls.

My brethren, that conviction, and that conviction

only, as I venture to affirm, has power to send a glow of love into the heart which will move all the limbs in swift and happy obedience. That conviction, and that conviction alone, will melt the thick-ribbed ice of our spirits and will make it flow down in sweet waters. The love that has looked upon the Cross will be the fulfilling of the law of Him that speaks from the Throne. When our faith has grasped Him, as enduring that cross for us, then our love will be awakened to hear and to do His commandments.

‘We love Him because He first loved us,’ and such love will flower and fruit in obedience. I shall keep His commandments when I love Him. I shall love Him with a love that makes my will plastic and my life a glad service, when by faith I grasp Him as the Incarnate Lord, ‘who loved me and gave Himself for me.’

THE COMFORTER GIVEN

‘And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.’—JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

THE ‘and’ at the beginning of these words shows us that they are continuous with and the consequence of what precedes. ‘If ye love Me, *ye will keep* My commandments, and *I will pray . . . and He will send.*’ Such is the series; but we must also remember that, as we have seen in previous sermons, the obedience spoken of in the clause before my text is itself treated as a consequence of some preceding steps. The ladder that is fixed upon earth and has its summit in heaven has

for its rungs, first and lowest, 'believe'; second, 'love'; third, 'obey.' And thus the context carries us from the very basis of the Christian life up into its highest reward, even the larger gift to an obedient spirit of that Great Spirit, who is the Comforter and the Teacher.

And there is another very striking link of connection between these words and the preceding. There are, if I may so say, two telephones across the abyss that separates the ascended Christ and us. One of them is contained in His words, 'If ye ask anything in My name I will do it'; the other is contained in these words, 'If ye keep My commandments I will ask.' Love on this side of the great cleft sets love on the other side of it in motion in a twofold fashion. If we ask, He does; if we do, He asks. His action is the answer to our prayers, and His prayers are the answer to our obedient action. So we have here these points—the praying Christ and the giving Father; the abiding Gift; the blind world and the recipient disciples.

I. Note, then, first, the praying Christ and the giving Father.

'I will ask and He will give' seems a strange drop from the lofty claims with which we have become familiar in the earlier verses of this chapter. 'Believe in God, believe also in Me'; 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'; 'If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it'; 'Keep My commandments.' All these distinctly express, or necessarily imply, divine nature, prerogatives, and authority. But here the voice that spake the perfect revelation of God, and gave utterance authoritatively to the perfect law of life, softens and lowers its tones in petition; and Jesus Christ joins the rank of the suppliants. Now common sense tells us that apparently diverse views lying as

close together in one continuous stream of speech cannot have seemed to the utterer of them to be contradictory; and I venture to affirm that there is no explanation which does justice to these two sides of Christ's consciousness—the one all divine and authoritative and lofty, and the other all lowly and identifying Himself with petitioners and suppliants everywhere—except the old-fashioned and to-day discredited belief that He is 'God manifest in the flesh,' who prays in His Manhood and hears prayer in His Divinity. The bare humanistic view which emphasises such utterances as these of my text does not, for the life of it, know what to do with the other ones, and cannot manage to unite these two images into a stereoscopic solid. That is reserved for the faith which believes in the Manhood and in the Deity of our Lord and Saviour.

His intercession is the great hope of the Christian heart. His intercession is the great activity of His present exalted and glorious state. His intercession is no mere verbal utterance, nor the representation to the Father of an alien or a diverse will, but His intercession, mysterious as it is, and unfathomable to our poor, short lines and light plummet, must mean this at all events—His continual activity in presenting before the divine Father, as the motive and condition of His petition being granted, His own great work upon the Cross. The High Priest passes within the veil, bearing in His hand the offering which He has made, and by reason of that offering, and of His powerful presence before the mercy-seat, all the spiritual gifts which redeem and regenerate and sanctify humanity are for ever coming forth. 'I will pray, and He will give,' is but one way of saying, 'Seeing then, that we have a great High Priest over the

House of God who is entered within the veil, let us draw near.'

But I would have you notice how, as is always the case in all utterances of Jesus Christ which express the lowest humiliation and completest identification of Himself with humanity, there is ever present some touch of obscured glory, some all but suppressed flash of brightness which will not be wholly concealed. Note two things in this great utterance; one, Christ's quiet assumption that all through the ages, and to-day, nineteen centuries after He died, He knows, at the moment of their being done, His servants' deeds. 'Keep my commandments, and, knowing that you keep them, I will then and there pray for you.' He claims in the lowly words an altogether supernatural, abnormal, divine cognisance of all the acts of men down the ages and across the gulf between earth and heaven.

And the other signature of divinity stamped on the prayer of Christ is His certitude of the answer. 'I will ask and He will give': He puts, as it were, the Father's act in pledge to us, and assures us, in a tone of certainty, which is not merely the assurance of faith, but the certitude of One who is 'one with the Father,' that His prayer brings ever its answer. 'Father! I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me.' How strange! How far beyond the warrantable language of man! And how impossible for a fisherman of Bethsaida to imagine, if he had not heard, that strange blending of submission and of authority which speaks in such words!

Then, remember what I have already said, that, according to the teaching of this verse, taken in connection with its context, that which put in motion

Christ's intercessory activity, as represented in my text, is the obedience of a Christian man. If you obey He will pray, and the Father will send. So the reward of imperfect obedience is the larger measure given to us of that divine Spirit by whose indwelling obedience becomes possible, and self-surrender a joy and a power. And that is not merely because of the natural operation by which any kind of conduct tends to repeat itself in more complete measure, nor is it merely a case of 'to him that hath shall be given'; as a man's arm is strengthened by exercise, and any faculty becomes more assured, and swift, and at the command of its owner, by use. But there is a distinct supernatural impartation to every obedient heart of divine gifts which come straight through Jesus Christ to it. He Himself, in this immediate context, says, 'If I depart I will send Him unto you,' and the true conception is that in that Spirit's gift, which is a reality waiting as its crown and reward upon our poor stained obedience, the whole Godhead is present; the Father the Source, the Son the Channel, the Spirit the Gift.

II. And so, secondly, note what our text tells us of that abiding gift.

'He will send another Comforter,' 'that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.' I suppose I may take it for granted that most of my audience know all that need be said as to the meaning of this word 'Comforter.' In our present modern English it has a very much narrower range of meaning than its etymology would give it, and than probably it had when it was first used in an English translation. 'Comforter' means a great deal more than 'consoler,' though we have narrowed it to that signification almost exclusively. It means not only

one who administers sweet whispers of consolation in sorrow, but one who, in any circumstances, by his presence makes strong. And the original Greek word, of which it is the translation here, has a precisely analogous meaning; its original signification being that of 'one who is called to the aid of another,' primarily as an advocate in a court of law, but more widely as a helper in any form whatsoever. And that is the idea which is to be attached to the word here:— a Comforter who makes strong by His presence; the Paraclete, who is our Advocate, Helper, Guide, and Instructor. Need I dwell upon the great thoughts that spring from that metaphor; how we have to look for a Person, and not merely a vague influence; a divine Person who will be by our sides on condition of our faith, love, and obedience, to be our Strength in all weakness, our Peace in all trouble, our Wisdom in all darkness, our Guide in every perplexity, our Comforter and Cherisher, our Righteousness when sin is strong, the Victor over our temptations, and the Companion and Sweetener of our solitude? The metaphors with which Scripture represents this great personal Influence are full of instruction and beauty. He comes as 'the Fire,' which melts, which warms, which cleanses, which quickens. He comes as the 'rushing, mighty Wind,' which bears health upon its wings, and sometimes breathes softly as an infant's breath, and sometimes sweeps with irresistible power. He comes as the 'Oil,' gently flowing, lubricating, making every joint supple, nourishing. He comes as the 'Water of Life,' refreshing, vitalising, quickening all growth. He comes fluttering down as the Dove of God, the bird of peace that will brood upon our hearts. The predicates which Scripture attaches to that great

Name are equally various, and are full of teaching as to the manner in which He is the Comforter and the Advocate. He is the Spirit of Holiness, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Power, the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of a sound Mind, the Spirit of Sonship, the Spirit of Supplication, and of many great things besides. And this sweet, strong, all-sufficient Person is offered to each of us, and waits to enter our hearts.

And, says Christ, this Strengtheners and Advocate is to replace Me and to carry on My work. 'He will send *another* Comforter.' Who was the other but the Master who was speaking? So all that that handful of men had found of sweetness and shelter and assured guidance, and stay for their weakness, and enlightenment for their darkness, and companionship for their solitude, and a breast on which to rest their heads, and love in which to bathe their hearts, all *these* this divine Spirit will bring to each of us if we will.

And further, our Lord tells us that this strong continuer of His presence will be a permanent Companion. 'He will abide with you for ever.' He was comforting the disciples who were trembling at the thought of His departure, and knowing that all the sweetness of these three short years had come to an end; and He says to them, and through them to all the ages to the end of time: 'Here is the abiding Guest, that nothing but your own sin will ever cast out from your hearts.'

And Christ tells us how this great Spirit will do His work. He is the 'Spirit of Truth,' not as if He brought new truth. To suppose that He does so, opens the door to all manner of fanaticism, but the truth, the revelation of which is all summed and finished

in the person and work of Jesus Christ, is the weapon by which the divine Spirit works all His conquests, the staff on which He makes us lean and be strong. He is the Spirit by whom the truth passes into our personal possession, by no mere imperfect form of outward teaching which is always confused and insufficient, but by the inward teaching that deals with our hearts and our spirits.

But Christ speaks, too, of the blind world. There is a tone of deep sadness in His words. The thought of the immense multitude of men who were incapacitated to receive this Strengtheners steals across and casts a momentary shadow upon even the brightness and greatness of His promise. 'The world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.' The 'world' is the mass of man, considered as godless and separate from Him, and there is a bit of the world in us all; but there are men who are wholly under its influence and dominion. And these men, says Christ, are perfectly incapable of receiving the teaching of this divine Comforter. Of course there are other operations of that Great Spirit of which we shall have to hear as we go on further in this context, in which His work 'convicts the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.' But what our Lord is speaking of here is the work of that Spirit who comes in response to His prayer which rises in consequence of our obedience, and who, coming, brings with Him strength and purity and peace and wisdom; and that aspect of His operations a heart that is all full and seething with the world is unfit to receive. It cannot see Him. Embruted natures are altogether incapacitated for high thoughts, for the perception of natural beauty, for the appreciation of art; and worldly men, by the

very same law, are incapable of receiving this divine Spirit. A savage stares at the sunshine and sees nothing but a glare. And worldly men—that is to say, men whose tastes, inclinations, desires, hopes, purposes, strivings, are all bound by this visible diurnal round—lack the organ that enables them to see that divine Spirit moving round about them. Whether you have put your eyes out by fleshly lusts, or, as many men in this generation have done, by intellectual self-sufficiency and conceit, if the world, in its grosser or in its most refined forms, is your master, you are stone blind to all the best realities of the universe, and you cannot see the things that are. If you look out upon the history of the Church, or upon the present condition of Christendom, and say, ‘I see no divine Spirit working there’; well, then, the only thing that is to be said to you is, ‘Go to an oculist; your sight is bad. Perhaps there is solid land, as some of us see it, where you see only mist.’ This generation needs the preaching of a supernatural power at work beside us, and among us, and until we come to believe *that*, we do not understand the fullness of Christ’s gift.

III. Then, lastly, note the recipient disciples.

Observe that the order of clauses is reversed in the last part of the text. The world cannot receive, because it does not know. The disciple knows, because he receives. Possession and knowledge reciprocally interchange places, and may be regarded as cause and effect of one another. That is to say, at bottom they are one and the same thing. Knowledge is possession, and possession is the only knowledge. These disciples knew Christ in a fashion. He had just been telling them that they did not know Him; but so far as they did dimly grasp Him, they saw the Spirit—in

another form, indeed, than they would hereafter see—but still truly, though imperfectly. Beholding the Spirit, though ‘through a glass darkly,’ and cherishing their partial possession of Him, they will come to more, and steadfastly increase from the morning’s twilight to the midday glory. So He says: ‘He dwelleth with you’ now, and ‘He shall be *in you*’ hereafter. There is a better form of possession opening before them, which came at Pentecost, and has lasted ever since. From thenceforward we have a Spirit that not only stands by our sides and holds fellowship with us (for the two ‘withs’ of our text are two different words, expressing respectively proximity and communion), but who actually dwells in the central depths of our natures, and whom we thus possess more perfectly and blessedly than is possible to even the closest outward proximity, and the sweetest outward fellowship.

That possession of an abiding and indwelling Spirit is the gift of Christ to every Christian soul, and is to be found by us all upon the path so plainly marked out in our text and its connections—‘believe,’ ‘love,’ ‘obey.’ Then the Dove of God will flutter down upon our heads and nestle in our hearts, and brooding over the solemn and solitary sea of our chaotic spirits, will bring up from it a new world glistening in fresh order and beauty, and ‘very good’ in its *Maker’s eyes*.

THE ABSENT PRESENT CHRIST

'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live, ye shall live also.'
—JOHN xiv. 18, 19.

THE sweet and gracious comfortings with which Christ had been soothing the disciples' fears went very deep, but hitherto they had not gone deep enough. It was much that they should know the purpose of His going, whither He went, and that they had an interest in His departure. It was much that they should have before them the prospect of reunion; much that they should know that all through His absence He would be working in them, and that they should be assured that, absent, He would send them a great gift. But reunion, influence from afar, and gifts from the other side of the gulf were not all that their hearts needed. And so here our Lord gives yet more, in the paradoxes that, absent He will be present, unseen visible, and dying will be for them for ever, living and life-giving. These great thoughts go to the centre of their needs and of ours; and on them I now touch briefly.

There are then in the words I have read, though they be but a fragment of a closely-linked-together context, these three great thoughts: the absent Christ the present Christ; the unseen Christ the seen Christ; the Christ who dies the living and life-giving Christ. Let us look at these as they stand.

I. First, then, the absent Christ is the present Christ.

'I will not leave you comfortless,' or, as the Revised Version has it, 'desolate—I come to you.' Now, most of us know, I suppose, that the literal meaning of the word rendered 'comfortless,' or 'desolate,' is '*orphans*.' But that is rather an unusual form in which to represent the relation between our Lord and His disciples,

and so, possibly, our versions are accurate in giving the general idea of desolation rather than the specific idea conveyed directly by the word. But still it is to be remembered that this whole conversation begins with 'Little children'; and there seems to be no strong reason for suppressing the literal meaning of the word, if only it be remembered that it is employed not so much to define Christ's relation to his brethren as to describe the comfortless and helpless condition of that little group when left by Him. They would be like fatherless and motherless children in a cold world. And what is to hinder that? One thing only. 'I come to you.' 'Then, and only then, will you cease to be desolate and orphans. My presence will change everything and turn winter into glorious summer.'

Now, what is this 'coming'? It is to be observed that our Lord says, not 'I will,' as a future, but 'I come,' or 'I am coming,' as an immediately impending, and, we may almost say, present, thing. There can be no reference in the word to that final coming to judgment which lies so far ahead; because, if there were, then there would follow from the text, that, until that period, all that love Him here upon earth are to wander about as orphans, desolate and forsaken; and that certainly can never be. So that we have to recognise here the promise of a coming which is contemporaneous with His absence, and which is, in fact, but the reverse side of His bodily absence.

It is true about Him that He 'departs from' His people in bodily form 'for a season, that they may receive Him' in a better form 'for ever.' This, then, is the heart and centre of the consolation here, that howsoever the external presence may be withdrawn, and the 'foolish senses' may have to speak of an absent

Christ, we may rejoice in the certainty that He is with all those that love Him, and all the more with them because of the very withdrawal of the earthly manifestation which has served its purpose, and now is laid aside as an impediment rather than as a help to the full communion. We confound *bodily* with *real*. The bodily presence is at an end ; the real presence lasts for ever.

I do not need to insist, I suppose, upon the manifest implication of absolute divinity which lies in such words as these. 'I come.' 'Being absent, I am present in all generations. I am present with every single heart.' That is equivalent to the Omnipresence of deity ; that is equivalent to or implies the undying existence of the divine nature, and He that says, when He is leaving earth and withdrawing the sweetness of His visible form from the eyes of men, 'I come,' in the very act of going, 'and I am with you always, with all of you to the end of the ages,' can be no less than God, manifest in the flesh for a time, and present in the Spirit with His children for ever.

I cannot but think that the average Christian life of this day wofully fails in the simple, conscious realisation of this great truth, and that we are all far too little living in the calm, happy, strengthening assurance that we are never alone, but have Jesus Christ with each of us more closely, more truly, in a more available fashion, and with more omnipotence of influence, than they had who were nearest Him during the days that He lived upon earth.

Oh, brethren ! if we really believed, not as an article of our creed which has become so familiar to us that it produces little impression upon us, but as a vital and ever-present conviction of our souls, that with us there

was ever the real presence of the real Christ, how all burdens and cares would be lightened, how all perplexities would begin to smooth themselves out and be straightened, how all the force would be sucked out of temptations, and how sorrows and joys and all things would be changed in their aspect by that one conviction intensely realised and constantly with us! A present Christ is the Strength, the Righteousness, the Peace, the Joy, and as we shall see, in the most literal sense, the Life of every Christian soul.

Then, note, further, that this coming of our Lord is identified with that of His divine Spirit. He has been speaking of sending that 'other Comforter,' but though He be Another, He is yet so indissolubly united with Him who sends as that the coming of the Spirit is the coming of Jesus. He is no gift wafted to us as from the other side of a gulf, but by reason of the unity of the Godhead and the divinity of the sent Spirit, Jesus Christ and the Spirit whom He sends are inseparable though separate, and so indissolubly united that where the Spirit is, there is Christ, and where Christ is, there is the Spirit. These are amongst the deep things which the disciples were 'not able to carry' at that stage of their development, and which waited for a further explanation. Enough for them and enough for us, to know that we have Christ in the Spirit and the Spirit in Christ; and to remember 'that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.'

We stand here on the margin of a shoreless and fathomless sea; and for my part I venture to think that the men who talk about the incredibilities and the contradictions of the orthodox faith would show themselves a little wiser if they were more conscious of the limitation of human faculty, and remembered

that to pronounce upon contradictions in the doctrine of the divine Nature implies that the pronouncer stands above and goes round about the whole of that nature. So, for my part, abjuring omniscience and the comprehension of Deity, I accept the statement that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit come together and dwell in the heart.

Then, note, further, that this present Christ is the only Remedy for the orphanhood of the world. The words had a tender and pathetic reference to that little, bewildered group of followers, deprived of their Guide, their Teacher, and their Companion. He who had been as eyes to their weak vision, and Counsellor and Inspirer and everything for three blessed years, was going away to leave them unsheltered to the storm, and we can understand how forlorn and terrified they were, when they looked forward to fronting the things that must come to them, without His presence. Therefore He cheers them with the assurance that they will not be left without Him, but that, present still, just because He is absent, He will be all that He ever had been to them.

And the promise was fulfilled. How did that dispirited group of cowardly men ever pluck up courage to hold together at all after the Crucifixion? Why was it that they did not follow the example of John's disciples, and dissolve and disappear; and say, 'The game is up. It is no use holding together any longer'? The process of separation began on the very day of the Crucifixion. Only one thing could have stopped it, and that is the Resurrection and the presence with His Church of the risen Christ in His power and in all the fullness of His gifts. If it had not been that He came to them, they would have disappeared. and Chris-

tianity would have been one more of the abortive sects forgotten in Judaism. But, as it is, the whole of the New Testament after Pentecost is aflame with the consciousness of a present Christ, working amongst His people. And although it be true that, in one aspect, we are absent from the Lord when we are present with the body, in another aspect, and an infinitely higher one, it is true that the strength of the Christian life of Apostles and martyrs was this, the assurance that Christ Himself—no mere rhetorical metaphor for His influence or His example, or His memory lingering in their imaginations, but the veritable Christ Himself—was present with them, to strengthen and to bless.

That same conviction you and I must have, if the world is not to be a desert and a dreary place for us. In a very profound sense it is true that if you take away Jesus Christ, the elder Brother, who alone reveals to men the Father, we are all orphans, fatherless children, who look up into an empty heaven and see nothing there. It is only Christ who reveals to us the Father and makes our happy hearts feel that we are of His children. And in the wider sense of the word 'orphans,' is not life a desolation without Him? Hollow joys, fleeting blessednesses, roses whose thorns last long after the petals have dropped, real sorrows, shows and shams, bitternesses and disappointments—are not these our life, in so far as Christ has been driven out of it? Oh! there is only one thing that saves us from being as desolate, fatherless children, groping in the dark for the lost Father's hand, and dying for want of it, and that is that the Christ Himself shall come to us and be with us.

II. The unseen Christ is a seen Christ.

It is clear that the period referred to in the second

clause of our text is the same as that referred to in the first, that 'yet a little while' covers the whole space up to His Ascension; and that if there be any reference at all to the forty days of His earthly life, during which literally, the world 'saw Him no more,' but the Apostles 'saw Him,' that reference is only secondary. These transitory appearances are not of sufficient moment or duration to bear the weight of so great a promise as this. The vision, which is the consequence of the coming, has the same extension in time as the coming—that is to say, it is continuous and permanent. We must read here the great promise of a perpetual vision of the present Christ.

It is clear, too, that the word 'see' is employed in these two clauses in two different senses. In the former it refers only to bodily sight, in the latter to spiritual perception. For a few short hours still, the ungodly mass of men were to have that outward vision which might have been so much to them, but which they had used so badly that 'they seeing saw not.' It was to cease, and they who loved Him would not miss it when it did; but the withdrawal which hid Him from sense and sense-bound souls would reveal Him more clearly to His friends. They, too, had but dimly seen Him while He stood by them; they would gaze on Him with truer insight when He was present though absent.

So this is what every Christian life may and should be—the continual sight of a continually-present Christ. It is His part to come. It is ours to see, to be conscious of Him who does come.

Faith is the sight of the soul, and it is far better than the sight of the senses. It is more direct. My eye does not touch what I look at. Gulfs of millions of miles may lie between me and it. But my faith is not

only eye, but hand, and not only beholds, but grasps, and comes into contact with that to which it is directed. It is far more clear. Sense may deceive; faith, built upon His Word, cannot deceive. Its information is far more certain, far more valid. I have better reason for believing in Jesus Christ than I have for believing in the things that I touch and handle. So that there is no need for men to say, 'Oh, if we had only seen Him with our eyes!' You would very likely not have known Him if you had. There is no reason for thinking that the Church has retrograded in its privileges, because it has to love instead of beholding, and to believe instead of touching. That is advance, and we are better than they, inasmuch as the blessing of those 'who have not seen, and yet have believed,' comes down upon our heads. The vision of Christ which is granted to the faithful soul is better and not worse, more and not less, other in kind indeed, but loftier in degree too, than that which was granted to the men who saw Him upon earth. Sense disturbs, faith alone beholds.

'The world seeth Me no more.' Why? Because it is a world. 'Ye see Me.' Why? Because, and in the measure in which you have turned away your eyes from seeing vanity. If you want the eye of the soul to be opened, you must shut the eye of sense. And the more we turn away from looking at the dazzling lies with which time and the material universe befool and bewilder us, the more shall we see Him whom to see is to live for ever.

Oh, brethren! does that strong word 'see' in any measure express the vividness, the directness, the certainty of our realisation of our Master's presence? Is Jesus Christ as clear, as perceptible, as sure to us as

the men round us are? Which are the shadows and which are the realities to us? The things which are seen, which the senses crown as 'real,' or the things which cannot be seen because they are so great, and tower above us, invisible in their eternity? Which world are our eyes most open to, the world where Christ is, or the world here? Our happy eyes may behold and our blessed hands may handle the Word of Life which was manifested to us. Let us beware that we turn not away from the one thing worthy to be looked at, to gaze upon a desolate and dreary world.

III. Lastly, the present and seen Christ is living and life-giving.

The last words of my text may be connected with the preceding, as the marginal rendering of the Revised Version shows. But it is probably better to take them as standing independently, and presenting another and co-ordinate element of the blessedness arising from the coming of the Christ. Because He comes, His life passes into the hearts of the men to whom He comes, and who gaze upon Him.

Time forbids me to dwell upon that majestic proclamation of His own absolute and divine life, from lips that were so soon to be paled with death. Mark the grand 'I live'—the timeless present tense, which expresses unbroken, underived, undying, and, as I believe, divine life. It is all but a quotation of the great Old Testament name 'Jehovah.' The depth and sweep of its meaning are given to us in this Apostle's Apocalypse, where Christ is called 'the living One,' who lived whilst He died, and having died 'is alive for evermore.'

And this Christ, coming to all His friends, possessor of the fullness of life in Himself, and proclaiming His

absolute possession of that life, even whilst He stands within arm's-length of Calvary, is Life-giver to all that love Him and trust Him.

We live *because* He lives. In all senses of the word 'life,' as I believe, the life of men is derived from the Christ who is the Agent of creation, the channel from whom life passes from the Godhead into the creatures, and who is also the one means by whom any of us can ever hope to live the better life which is the only true one, and consists in fellowship with God and union to Him.

We shall live *as long as* He lives, and His being is the pledge and the guarantee of the immortal being of all who love Him. Anything is possible, rather than that it should be credible that a soul, which has drawn spiritual life from Jesus Christ here upon earth, should ever be rent apart from Him by such a miserable and external trifle as the mere dissolution of the bodily frame. As long as Christ lives our life is secure. If the Head has life, the members 'cannot see corruption.' 'Take *me* not away in the midst of my days: *Thy* years are throughout all generations' was the prayer of a saint of old, deeply feeling the contrast of the worshipper's transiency and God's eternity, and dimly hoping that the contrast might be changed into likeness. The great promise of our text answers the prayer, and assures us that the worshipper is to live as long as does He whom He adores.

We shall live *as* He lives, nor ever cease the appropriation of His being until all His life we know, and all its fullness has expanded our natures—and that will be never. Therefore we shall not die.

Men's lives have been prolonged by the transfusion of blood from vigorous frames. Jesus Christ passes

His own blood into our veins and makes us immortal. The Church chose for one of its ancient emblems of the Saviour the pelican, which fed its young, according to the fable, with blood from its own breast. So Christ vitalises us. He in us is our Life.

Brethren, without Jesus Christ we are orphans in a fatherless world. Without Him, our wearied and yet unsatisfied eyes have only trifles and trials and trash to look at. Without Him, we are 'dead whilst we live.' He and He only can give us back a Father, and renew in us the spirit of sons. He and only He can satisfy our eyes with the sight which is purity and restfulness and joy. He and He only can breathe life into our death. Oh! let Him do it for you. He comes to us with all these gifts in His hands, for He comes to give us Himself, and in Himself, as 'in a box where sweets compacted lie,' are all that lonely hearts and wearied eyes and dead souls can ever need. All are yours if you are Christ's. All are yours if He is yours. And He is yours if by faith and love you make yourself His and Him your own.

THE GIFTS OF THE PRESENT CHRIST

^c At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.'—JOHN xiv. 20, 21.

WE have heard our Lord in the previous verse unveiling His deepest and strongest encouragements to His downcast followers. These were: His presence with them, their true sight of Him, and their participation in His life. The first part of our present text is closely connected with these, for it gives us their upshot and

consequence. Because Christ's true disciple is conscious of Christ's presence, sees Him with the eyes of his spirit, and draws life from Him, therefore he will know by experience the deep truths of Christ's indwelling at once in the Father and in His servant, and of His servant's indwelling in Him. Our Lord had just previously been exhorting His disciples to *believe* that He was in the Father and the Father in Him; and had been gently wondering at the slowness of their faith. Now He tells them that, when He is gone, their spiritual stature will be so increased as that they shall *know* the thing which, with Him by their side, they found it so hard to believe.

The second part of our present text is the close of this whole section of our Lord's discourse, and in it He urges the requirement of practical obedience, as the sign and test of love, and as the condition of receiving these high and wonderful things of which He has been speaking. He has been unveiling spiritual blessings, which may seem recondite and up in the clouds, and which, as a matter of fact, have often been perverted into dreamy mysticisms of a most immoral and unpractical kind. And so He brings us sharp back again here to very plain truths, and would teach us that all these lofty and ineffable gifts of which He has been dimly speaking are to be reached only by the commonplace road of honest obedience and simple conformity to His commandments. In these last words of my text, He administers the antidote and the check to the possible abuses of the great things which He has been saying.

I. Note, then, first, the knowledge that comes with the Christ who comes.

'At that day' covers the whole period of which He has been speaking, between His withdrawal from the

disciples and His final corporeal coming to judgment—that great day of which generations are but the moments. In it the men who love Him are to have His presence, His vision, His life, and because they have, ‘Ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.’ The principle that underlies these wonderful words is that Christian experience is the best teacher of fundamental Christian truth. Observe with what decision, and with what strange boldness, our Lord carries that principle into regions where we might suppose at first sight that it was altogether inapplicable. ‘Ye shall know that I am in My Father.’ How can such a thing as the relation between Christ and God ever be a matter of consciousness to us here upon earth? Must it not always be a truth that we must take on trust and believe because we have been told it, without having any verification in ourselves? Not so; remember what has gone before. If a man has the consciousness of Christ’s presence with Him, sees Him with the true inward eye, which is the only real organ of real vision, and is drawing from Him, moment by moment, His own high and immortal life, then is it not true that this man’s experiences are of such a sort as to be utterly inexplicable, except on the ground that they come from a divine source? If I have these experiences I know that it is Jesus Christ who gives them, and I know that He could not give them, if He did not dwell in God and were not divine. These new influences, this revolution in my being, this healing, constraining, cleansing touch, these calming, gladdening, elevating powers, these new hopes, these reversed desires, loving all to which I was formerly indifferent, and growing dead to all that formerly appealed most strongly to me; all these things bear upon their very

front the signature that they are wrought by a divine hand, and as sure as I am of my own Christian consciousness, so sure am I that all its experiences proclaim their Author, and that Christ who gives me them is in God. 'Ye shall know that I am in My Father.'

The New Testament, as I read it, is full at every point of the divinity of Jesus Christ; and many profound and learned arguments on that subject have been urged by theologians, and these are all well and needful in their places, but the true way to be sure of it is to have Him dwelling with us and working in us; and then what was an article of belief becomes an article of knowledge, and we know Him to be our Saviour and the Son of God.

In like manner, and yet more obviously, the other elements of this knowledge which Christ promises here may be shown to flow naturally and necessarily from Christian experiences. 'That ye are in Me, and I in you,'—if a Christian man carries the consciousness of Christ's presence, and has Him as a Sun in his darkness, and as a Life-source feeding his deadness with life, then he knows with a consciousness which is irrefragable that Jesus Christ is in him, for he feels His touch; and he knows that he is in Christ, for he is aware of the power that girdles him, and in which he has peace and righteousness and all.

So, dear brethren, let us learn what the Christian man's experience ought to be and to do for him. It should change the articles of our creed into elements of our consciousness. It should make all the fundamentals of the Gospel vitally and vividly true; and certified by what has passed within our own spirits. We should be able to say: 'We have the witness in ourselves.' And though there will remain much that

is uncertain, much in Christian doctrine which is not capable of that clear and all-sufficing verification; much about which we must still depend on the mere teaching of others, or on our own study, the central facts which make the Gospel may all become, by this plain and short path, elements of our very consciousness which stand undeniable to us, whosoever denies them.

Such a direct way to knowledge is reasonable, is in full analogy with the manner by which we attain to the knowledge of everything except the mere external facts, the knowledge of which has arrogated to itself the exclusive name of 'science.' How do you know anything about love? You may read poems and tragedies to the end of time, and you will not understand it until you come under its spell for yourself; and then all the things that men said about it cease to be mere words, because you yourself have experienced the emotion.

'He must be loved, ere that to you
He will seem worthy of your love,'

and the only way to be sure, with a vital certitude, of Christ, is to take Christ for your very own, and then He comes into your very being, and dwells there quickening, the Sun and the Life.

So, dear brethren, though such certitude arising from experience, which in its nature is the very highest, is not available for other people, the fact that so many millions of men allege that in varying degrees they possess this certitude is available for other people, and there is nothing to be said by the unbeliever to this, the attestation of the Christian consciousness to the truth of the truths which it has tried. 'Whether

this man be a sinner or no, I know not.' You may jangle as much as you like about the questionable and controversial points that surround the Christian revelation. I do not care in the present connection what answer you give to them. 'Whether this man be a sinner or no, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' And we may push the war into the enemy's quarters, and say: 'Why! herein is a marvellous thing, that you that know everything do not know whence this man is, and yet He has opened mine eyes. You want facts; there are some. You want verification; we have verified by experience, and we set to our seals that God is true.'

'Oh but,' you say, 'this is not a fair account of the way in which Christian men and women generally feel about this matter.' Well, all that I can say about that is, so much the worse for the so-called Christian men and women. And if they are Christians, and do not know by this inward experience that Christ is divine and their Saviour, then there is only one of two reasons to be given for it; either their experience is so wretchedly superficial and fragmentary, so rudimentary as to be scarcely worth calling by the name; or, having the facts, they have failed to appreciate their significance, and to make their own by reflection the certitudes which are their own.

Brethren, it becomes every Christian man and woman to be able to say, 'Because I have Christ with me, and see Him, and derive my life from Him, I know that He is in the Father, and I in Him, and He in me.' And if you cannot say that, it is your own grasp of Him, or your meditation upon what you have got by your grasp, that is painfully and sinfully defective

II. My text speaks of the obedience which is the sign and test of love.

The words here are substantially equivalent to former words in the chapter which we have already considered, where our Lord says: 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments.'

There is, however, a slight difference in the point of view in the two sayings; the former begins with the root and traces it upwards and outwards to its fruits, love blossoming into obedience. Our text reverses the process, and takes the thing by the other end; begins with the fruits and traces them downwards and inwards to the root. 'He that hath and keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me.' The two sayings substantially mean the same thing; but in the one love is put first as the cause of obedience, and in the other obedience is put first, as the certain fruit and sure sign of love. The connection between these and the preceding words is, as I have already pointed out, that our Lord here brings all His lofty promises down to the sharp, practical requirement of obedience, as the only condition on which they can be fulfilled.

So note, and very briefly about this matter, how remarkably our Lord here declares the *possession* of His commandments to be a sign of love to Him. 'He that *hath*,' a word which is generally passed over in our reading—'He that hath My commandments, He it is that loveth Me.' Of course there are two ways of having His commandments; there is having them in the Bible, and there is having them in the heart;—present before my eye, as a law that I ought to obey, or present within my will, as a power that shapes it. And the latter is the only kind of 'having' that Christ regards as real and valid. The rest is only preparatory

and superficial. Love possesses the knowledge of the loved one's will. Is not that true? Do we not all know how strange is the power of divining desires that goes along with true affection, and how the power, not only of divining, but of treasuring, these desires is the test and the thermometer of our true love? Some of us, perhaps, keep laid away in sacred, secret places tattered, yellow, old bits of paper with the words of a dear one on them, that we would not part with. 'He that hath My commandments' laid up in lavender in the deepest recesses of his faithful heart, he it is 'that loveth Me.'

In like manner, our Lord says, the practical obedience to His commandments is the sure sign and test of love. I need not dwell upon that. There are two motives for keeping commandments—one because they are commanded, and one because we love Him that commands. The one is slavery, the other is liberty. The one is like the Arctic regions, cold and barren, the other is like tropical lands, full of warmth and sunshine, glorious and glad fertility.

The form of the sentence suggests how easy it is for people to delude themselves about their love to Jesus Christ. That emphatic 'he,' and the putting first of the character before its root is pointed out, are directed against false pretensions to love. The love that Christ stamps with His hall-mark, and passes as genuine, is no mere emotion, however passionate, however sweet; no mere sentiment, however pure, however deep. The tiniest little rivulet that drives a mill is better than a Niagara that rushes and foams and tumbles idly. And there is much so-called love to Jesus Christ that goes masquerading up and down the world, from which the paint is stripped by the sharp application of

the words of my text. Character and conduct are the true demonstrations of Christian love, and it is only love so attested that He accepts.

III. Lastly, notice the further and sweeter gifts of divine love and manifestation which reward our love and obedience.

‘He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.’ Two things, then, He tells us, are the rich rewards and sparkling crowns with which He crowns our poor love to Him—the love of the Father and the love of the Christ, separate and yet united, and the further manifestation of Christ’s sweetness to the waiting heart.

Note, as to the first, the extraordinary boldness of that majestic saying: ‘If a man loves *Me*, My Father will love *him*.’ God regards our love to Jesus Christ as the fulfilling of the law, as equivalent to our supreme love to Himself, as containing in it the germ of all that is pleasing in His sight. And so, upon our hearts, if we love Christ, there falls the benediction of the Father’s love. Of course I need not remind you that our Lord here is not beginning at the very beginning of everything; for prior to all men’s love to Christ is Christ’s love to men, and ours to Him is but the reflection and the echo called forth by His to us. ‘We love Him because He first loved us’ digs a story deeper down in the building than the words of my text, which is speaking, not of the process by which a man comes to receive the love of God for the first time, but of the process by which a Christian man grows in his possession of it. That being understood, here is a great lesson. It is not all the same to God whether a man is a scoundrel or a saint. The divine love is over all its works, and

embraces every variety of humanity, the most degraded, alien, hostile. But in this generation, as it seems to me, there is great need for preaching that whilst that is gloriously and blessedly true, the other thing is just as true, that to know the deepest depth and to taste the sweetest sweetness of the love of our Father God, there must be in our hearts love to Him whom He has sent, which manifests itself by our obedience. God's love is a moral love; and whilst the sunbeams play upon the ice and melt it sometimes, they flash back from, and rest most graciously and fully on, the rippling stream into which the ice has turned. God loves them that love Him not, but the depths of His heart and the secret, sacred favours of His grace can only be bestowed upon those who in some measure are conformed, and are growingly being conformed, to His likeness in Jesus Christ, and who love Him and obey Him.

And, in like manner, my text tells us that if we wish to know all that it is possible for us here, amidst the clouds, and shadows, and darknesses, to know of that dear Lord, the path to such knowledge is plain. Walk in the way of obedience, and Christ will meet you with the unveiling of more and more of His love. To live what we believe is the sure way to increase its amount. To be faithful to the little is the certain way to inherit the much. And Christ manifests Himself, in all deep and recondite sweetness, gentleness, constraining power, to the men who treasure the partial knowledge as yet possessed, in their loving hearts and obedient wills, and who make a conscience of translating all their knowledge into conduct, and of basing all their conduct on knowledge of Him. He gives us His whole self at the first, but we traverse

the breadth of the gift by degrees. He puts Himself into our hands and into our hearts when we humbly trust Him and imperfectly try to love Him. But the flower is but a bud when we get it, and, as we hold it, it opens its petals to the light.

So, if 'any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine'; and if, touched by His divine love and infinite sacrifice for me, I cast my poor self upon Him, and try to love Him back again, and to keep His commandments because I love, then day by day I shall realise more and more of His strong, immortal, all-satisfying love, and see more and more deeply into that Saviour, whose infinite beauties remain unrevealed after all revelation, and to know more and more of whom shall be the Heaven of Heavens yonder, as it is the joy and life of the soul here.

WHO BRING CHRIST

'Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me.'—JOHN xiv. 22-24.

THIS Judas held but a low place amongst the Apostles. In all the lists he is one of the last of the groups of fours, into which they are divided, and which were evidently arranged according to their spiritual nearness to the Master. His question is exactly that which a listener, with some dim, confused glimmer of Christ's meaning, might be expected to ask. He grasps at His last words about manifesting Himself to certain persons; he rightly feels that he and his brethren possess the qualification of love. He rightly understands that our

Lord contemplates no public showing of Himself, and that disappoints him. It was only a day or two ago that Jesus seemed to them to have begun to do what they had always wanted Him to do, manifest Himself to the world. And now, as he thinks, something unknown to them must have happened in order to make Him change His course, and go back to the old plan of a secret communication. And so he says, 'Lord! what has come to pass to induce you to abandon and falter upon the course on which we entered, when you rode into Jerusalem with the shouting crowd?'

His question is no better in intelligence, though it is a great deal better in spirit, than the taunt of Christ's brethren, 'If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world.' Judas, too, thought of the simple flashing of His Messianic glory, in some visible, vulgar form, before else blind eyes.

How sad and chilling such a question must have been to Jesus! Slow scholars we all are; and with what wonderful patience, without a word of pain, or of rebuke, He reiterates His lesson, here a little and there a little, and once more unfolds the conditions of His self-revelation, and the fullness of the blessings that He brings. He moulds His words so as to meet both the clauses of Judas's foolish question—'To us, not to the world'; and quietly tells them the positive conditions and the negative disqualifications for His self-revelation. So my text deals with two things, the crown of loving obedience in the possession of a fuller Christ, and the impassable barrier to His manifestation which unloving disobedience makes. Or to put it into briefer words, we have in one of the verses—first, what brings Christ and what Christ brings; and, in the other, second, what keeps away Christ

and all His gifts. Now let us look at these two things.

I. We have what brings Christ and what Christ brings.

'If a man love Me, He will keep My word' (not 'words,' as our Authorised Version has it), 'and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.' Now notice how here, in the first part of this verse, our Lord subtly and significantly alters the form of the statement which He has already made. He had formerly said, 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments,' but now He casts it into a purely impersonal form, and says, '*If a man,*' anybody, not 'you' only, but anybody—'If a man love Me, he,' anybody, 'will keep My word.' And why the change? Why, I suppose, in order to strike full and square against that complacent assumption of Judas that it was 'to us and not to the world' that the showing was to take place. Our Lord, by the studiously impersonal form into which He casts the promise, proclaims its universality, and says this to His ignorant questioner, 'Do not suppose that you Apostles have the monopoly. You may not even have a share in My self-manifestation. Anybody may have it. And there is no "world," as you suppose, to which I do not show Myself. Anybody may have the vision if he observes the conditions.'

Now I need not dwell at any length upon the earlier words of this text, because we have had to consider them in previous sermons on the former verses of this chapter. I need only remark that here, as there, our Lord brings out the thought that the very life-blood of love is the treasuring of the word of the beloved One; and that there is no joy comparable to the joy of the

loving heart that yields itself to the Beloved's will. That is true about earth, and it makes the sweetest and selectest blessedness of our ordinary existence. And it is true about heaven, and it makes the liberty and the gladness of the bond that knits us to Him.

But I would like just to notice, before I come to the more immediate subject of my discourse, that remarkable expression, 'He will keep My *word*.' That is more than a 'commandment,' is it not? Christ's 'word' is wider than *precept*. It includes all His sayings, and it includes them all as in one vital unity and organic whole. We are not to go picking and choosing among them; they are one. And it includes this other thought, that every word of Christ, be it revelation of the deep things of God, or be it a promise of the great shower of blessings which, out of His full hand, He will drop upon our heads, enshrines within itself a commandment. He utters no revelations, simply that we may know. He utters no comforting words, simply that our sore hearts may be healed, but in all His utterances there is a practical bearing; and every word of His teaching, every word of His sweet, whispered assurances of love and favour to the waiting heart, has in it the imperativeness of His manifested will, and has a direct bearing upon duty. All His *words* are gathered into one *word*, and all the variety of His sayings is, in their unity, the law of our lives. So much by way of observation on the mere language of my text. And now let us look at what, as He says to us here, are the rewards and crown of loving obedience.

Christ will show Himself to the loving heart. That is true on the very lowest level. Every act of obedience to any moral truth is rewarded by additional

insight. Every act of submission to His will cleanses the lenses of the telescope from some film that has gathered upon them, and so the stars look brighter and larger and nearer. All duty done opens out into a loftier conception of duty, and a clearer vision of Him. 'To him that hath shall be given.' As we climb the hill we get a wider view. Obedience is in all things the parent of insight.

But in reference to our relation to Him, we have to do not with truths only, but with a Person. How do we learn to know people? There is only one way—that is, by loving them. Sympathy is the parent of all true knowledge of one another. They tell us in the foolish old proverb that 'love is blind.' No! There is not such a pair of clear eyes anywhere as the eyes of love; and if we want to see into a man, the first condition is that we feel kindly towards him. Sympathy is the parent of insight into persons, as Obedience is the parent of insight into duty.

But both of these illustrations are only imperfect preparations for the great truth here, which is that our loving obedience to the discerned will of Jesus Christ has not only an operation inwards upon us, but has an effect outwards upon Him. I am afraid that Christian people in this generation have but a very imperfect belief in the actual, supernatural, and, if you like to call it so, miraculous manifestation of Jesus Christ, His very Self, to men that love Him and cleave to Him. Do you believe as a simple revealed truth, plain as a sunbeam in such words as these, that Jesus Christ Himself will do something on you, and in you, and for you, if you love Him and trust Him; that His hand will be laid on your eyes as it was laid of old; that He will indeed, in no metaphor, but in

reality, show Himself to you? I may be mistaken, but I think that too commonly it is the case, that even good Christian people have a far more vivid and realising and real faith in the past work of Christ on earth than in the present work of Christ in themselves. They think the one a plain truth, and the other something like a metaphor, whereas the New Testament teaches us, as plainly as it can teach us anything, that, far above all the natural operations of truth upon our understandings, hearts, and wills, there is an actual, supernatural, continuous communication of Christ to hearts that love Him, which leads day by day, if they be faithful, to a fuller knowledge, a sweeter love, a larger possession, of a fuller Christ. And it is this that He tells us of, to fire our ambition to attain, in such words as these.

Brethren, one piece of honest, loving obedience is worth all the study and speculation of an unloving heart when the question is, 'How are we to see Christ?'

Again, Jesus shows Himself to the obedient heart in indissoluble union with the Father. Look at the majesty, and, except upon one hypothesis, the insane presumption, of such words as these: 'If a man love *Me*, My Father will love *him*'; as if identifying love to Christ with love to Himself. And look at that wondrous union, the consciousness of which speaks in '*We* will come.' Think of a *man* saying that. It is blasphemous insanity; or else the speech of Him who is conscious of union with the Father, close and indissoluble and transcending all analogies. '*We* will come,' together, hand-in-hand, if I may so say; or rather, His coming is the Father's coming. Just as in heaven so closely are they represented as united, that there is but one throne 'for God and the Lamb.'

so on earth so closely are they represented as united, that there is but one coming of the Father in the Son.

And this is the only belief, as it seems to me, that will keep this generation from despair and moral suicide. The question for this generation is, Is it possible for men to know God? Science, both of material things and of inward experiences, is more and more unanimous in its proclamation; 'Behold! we know not anything'; and the only attitude to take before that great black vault above us is to say, 'We know nothing.' The world has learned half of a great verse of the Gospel: 'No man hath seen God at any time, nor can see Him.' If the world is not to go mad, if hearts are not to be tortured into despair, if morality and enthusiasm and poetry and everything higher and nobler than the knowledge of material phenomena and their sequences is not to perish from the earth, the world must learn the next half of the verse, and say, 'The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.' Christ shows Himself in indissoluble union with the Father.

Lastly about this matter, Christ shows Himself to obedient love by a true coming. 'We will come and make our mansion with him.' And that coming is a fact of a higher order, and not to be confounded either with the mere divine Omnipresence, by which God is everywhere, nor to be reduced to a figment of our own imaginations, or a strong way of promising increased perception on our part of Christ's fullness. That great central Sun, if I might use so violent a figure, draws nearer and nearer and nearer to the planets that move about it, and having once been far off on an almost infinitely distant horizon, approaches until planet and Sun unite.

Dear brethren, if we could only get to the attitude of simple acceptance of this as a literal truth, and believe that, in prose reality, Christ comes to every heart that loves Him, would not all the world be different to us?

That coming is a permanent residence: 'We will make our *abode* with him.' Very beautiful is it to notice that our Lord here employs that same sweet and significant word, with which He began this wonderful series of encouragements, when He said, 'In My Father's house are many *mansions*.' Yonder they dwell for ever with God; here God in Christ for ever dwells with the loving heart. It is a permanent abode so long as the conditions are fulfilled, but only so long. If self-will, rising in the Christian heart from its torpor and apparent death, reasserts itself and shakes off Christ's yoke, Christ's presence vanishes. In the last hours of the Holy City there was heard by the trembling priests amidst the midnight darkness the motion of departing Deity, and a great voice said: 'Let us depart hence'; and to-morrow the shrine was empty, and the day after it was in flames. Brethren, if you would keep the Christ in whom is God, remember that He cannot be kept but by the act of loving obedience.

II. Now, in the next place, my text gives us the negative side, and shows us what keeps away Christ and all His blessings.

An unloving disobedience closes the eyes to the vision, and the heart against the entrance, of that dear Lord. Our Master lays down for us two principles, and leaves us to draw the conclusion for ourselves.

The first is, 'He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings.' No love, no obedience. That is plainly true, because the heart of all the commandments is

love, and where that is not, disobedience to their very spirit is. It is plainly true, because there is no power that will lead men to true obedience to Christ's yoke except the power of love. His commandments are too alien from our nature ever to be kept, unless by the might of love. It was only the rising sunbeam that could draw music from the stony lips of Memnon, as he gazed out across the desert, and it is only when Christ's love shines on our faces that we open our lips in praise, and move our hands in service. Those great rocking-stones down in Cornwall stand unmoved by any tempest, but a child's finger, laid on the right place, will set them vibrating. And so the heavy, hard, stony bulk of our hearts lies torpid and immovable, until He lays His loving finger upon them, and then they rock at His will. There is no keeping of Christ's commandments without love. That makes short work of a great deal that calls itself Christianity, does it not? Reluctant obedience is no obedience; self-interested obedience is no obedience; constrained obedience is no obedience; outward acts of service, if the heart be wanting, are rubbish and dung. Morality without religion is nought. The one thing that makes a good man is love to Jesus Christ; and where that is, there, and only there, is obedience.

'Talk they of morals? O Thou Bleeding Lamb!
The grand morality is love of Thee.'

'If a man love Me not, he will not keep My words.'

Then the second principle is, disobedience to Christ is disobedience to God. 'The Word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's.' Christ's consciousness of union so speaks out here as that He is quite sure that

all His words are God's words, and that all God's words are spoken by Him. Paul has to say, 'So speak I, not the Lord.' And you would not think a man a very sound or safe religious teacher who said to you, to begin with, 'Now, mind, everything that I say, God says.' There are no errors then, no deterioration of the treasure by the vessel in which it lies. The water does not taste of the vase in which it is carried. The personality of Jesus Christ is never, through all His utterances, so separated from God but that God speaks in Him; and, listening to His voice, we hear the absolute utterance of the uncreated and eternal Wisdom.

Therefore follows the conclusion, which our Lord does not state, but leaves us to supply. If it be true that the absence of love of Him is disobedience to Him, and if it be true that disobedience to Him is disobedience to God, then it plainly follows that what keeps away Christ and all His gifts, and God in Him, is unloving obedience. What brings Him is the obedience of love; what repels Him is alienation and rebellion. If the heart be full of confusion, of the world, of self, of unbridled inclinations, of careless indifference to His bleeding love, He 'can but listen at the gate and hear the household jar within.'

And so, dear friends, from all this there follow one or two points, which I touch very briefly. One is, that it is possible for men not to see Christ, though He stands there close before them. It is possible to grope at noonday as at midnight, to see only 'bracken green and cold grey stone' on the hillside, where another man sees the chariots of fire and the horses of fire. It is possible for you—and, alas! it is the condition of some of my hearers—to look upon Christ and to turn

away and say, 'I see no beauty in Him that I should desire Him,' whilst the man beside you, looking at the same facts and the same face, can see in Him the 'Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.'

Another thought is, that Christ's showing of Himself to men is in no sense arbitrary. It is you that determine what you shall see. You can hermetically seal your heart against Him, you can blind yourself to all His beauty. The door of your hearts is hinged to open from within, and if you do not open it, it remains shut, and Christ remains outside.

Another thought is, that you do not need to *do* anything to blind yourselves. Simple negation is fatal. 'If a man love not'; that is all. The absence of love is your ruin.

And the last thought is this, that my text does not begin at the beginning. Jesus Christ has been speaking about manifestations of Himself to the loving and obedient; but there are manifestations of Himself made that we may *become* loving and obedient. You can build a barrier over which these sweeter revelations, of which loyal love and docile submission are the conditions, cannot rise. But you cannot build a barrier over which the prior revelations to the unthankful and disobedient cannot rise. No mountains of sin and neglect and alienation can be piled so high but that the flood of pardoning grace will rise above their crests, and pour itself into your hearts. You ask, How can I get the love and obedience of which you have been singing the praises now? There is only one answer, brethren. We know that we love Him when we know that He loves us; and we know that He loves us when we see Him dying on His Cross. So here is the ladder, that is planted in the miry clay

of the horrible pit, and fastens its golden hooks on His throne. The first round is, Behold the dying Christ and His love to me. The second is, Let that love melt my heart into sweet responsive love. The third is, Let my love mould my life into obedience. And then Christ, and God in Him, will come to me and show Himself to me; and give me a fuller knowledge and a deeper love, and make His dwelling with me. And then there is only one round still to reach, and that will land us by the Throne of God, in the many mansions of the Father's house, where we shall make our abode with Him for evermore.

THE TEACHER SPIRIT

'These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.'—JOHN xiv. 25, 26.

THIS wonderful outpouring of consolation and instruction with which our Lord sought to soothe the pain of parting is nearing its end. We have to conceive of a slight pause here, whilst He looks back upon what He has been saying and contrasts His teaching with that of the Comforter, whom He has once already, though in a different connection, promised to His followers. He speaks of His earthly residence with them as being 'an abiding,' distinctly therein referring to what He has just said, that the Father and He will, in the future, 'make their abode' with His disciples. He contrasts the outward and transitory presence which was now nearing its end, with the inward and continuous presence, which its end was to inaugurate.

And, in like manner, with, at first sight, startling

humility, He contrasts 'these things,' the partial and to a large extent unintelligible utterances which He had given with His human lips, with the complete, universal teaching of that divine Spirit, who was to instruct in 'all things' pertaining to man's salvation. We have then, here, sketched in broad outline, the great truths concerning the ever-present, inward Teacher of God's Church who is to come, now that the earthly manifestation of Christ, whom the twelve called their 'Teacher,' had reached a close. I think we may best gain the deep instruction which lies in the words before us, if we look at three points of view which they bring into prominence: the Teacher, His lesson, and His scholars.

I. Now, as to the first, the promised Teacher.

I need not repeat what I have said in former sermons as to the wide sweep of that word 'the Comforter,' beyond just reminding you that it means literally one who is called to the side of another, primarily for the purpose of being his representative in some legal process; and, more widely, for any purpose of help, encouragement, and strength. That being so, 'Comforter,' in its modern sense of *Consoler*, is far too narrow for the full force of the word, which means much rather 'Comforter,' in its ancient and etymological sense of one who, in company with another, makes Him strong and brave.

But the point to which I desire to turn attention now is this, that this comforting and strengthening office of the divine Spirit is brought into immediate connection here with the conception of Him as a Teacher. That is to say, the best strength that God, by His Spirit, can give us is by our firm grasp and growing clearness of understanding of the truths

which are wrapped up in Jesus Christ. All power for endurance, for service, is there, and when the Spirit of God teaches a man what God reveals in Christ, He therein and thereby most fully discharges His office of Strengtheners.

Then note still further the other designation of this divine Teacher which is here given: 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.' We might have expected, as indeed we find in another context in this great final discourse, the 'Spirit of Truth' as appropriate in connection with the office of teaching. But is there not a profound lesson for us here in this, that, side by side with the thought of illumination, there lies the thought of purity built upon consecration, which is the Scripture definition of holiness? That suggests that there is an indissoluble connection between the real knowledge of God's truth and practical holiness of life. That connection is of a double sort. There is no holiness without such knowledge, and there is no such knowledge without holiness.

There is no real knowledge of Christ and His truth without purity of heart. The man who has no music in his soul can never be brought to understand the deep harmonies of the great masters and magicians of sound. The man who has no eye for beauty can never be brought to bow his spirit before some of those embodiments of loveliness and sublimity which the painter's brush has cast upon the canvas. And the man who has no longings after purity, nor has attained to any degree of moral conformity with the divine image, is not in possession of the sense which is needed in order that he should understand the 'deep things of God.'

The scholars in this school have to wash their hands before they go to school, and come there with clean hands and clean hearts. Foulness and the love of it are bars to all understanding of God's truth. And, on the other hand, the truest inducements, motives, and powers for purity are found in that great word which is all 'according to godliness,' and is meant much rather to make us good than to make us wise.

So, in this designation of the teaching Spirit as holy, there lie lessons for two classes of people. All fanatical professions of possessing divine illumination, which are not warranted and sealed by purity of life, are lies or self-delusion. And, on the other hand, cold-blooded intellectualism will never force the locks of the palace of divine truth, but they that come there must have clean hands and a pure heart; and only those who have the love and the longing for goodness will be wise scholars in Christ's school. Your theology is nothing unless its distinct outcome is morality, and you must be prepared to accept the painful, the punitive, the purifying influences of that divine Spirit on your moral natures if you want to have His enlightening influences shining on the 'truth as it is in Jesus.' 'If any man wills to do His will, he,' and only he, 'shall know of the doctrine.' Knowledge and holiness are as inseparable in divine things as light and heat.

And still further note that this great Teacher is 'sent by God' in Christ's name. That pregnant phrase, 'In My name,' cannot be represented by any one form of expression into which we may translate it, but covers a larger space. God in Christ's name sends the Spirit. That is to say, in some deep sense God acts as Christ's representative; just as Christ comes in the

Father's name and acts as His representative. And, again, God sends in Christ's name; that is, the historical manifestation of Christ is the basis on which the sending of the Spirit is possible and rests. The revelation had to be complete before He who came to unfold the meaning of the revelation had material to work upon. The Spirit, which is sent in Christ's name, has, for the basis of His mission, and the means by which He acts, the recorded facts of Christ's life and death, these and none other.

And then note finally about this matter, the strong and unmistakable declaration here, that that divine Spirit is a person: 'He shall teach you all things.' They tell us that the doctrine of the Trinity is not in the New Testament. The *word* is not, but the *thing* is. In this verse we have the Father, the Son, and the Spirit brought into such close and indissoluble union as is only vindicated from the charge of blasphemy by the belief in the divinity of each. Just as the Apostolic benediction, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit' necessarily involves the divinity of all who are thus invoked, so we stand here in the presence of a truth which pierces into the deeps of Deity. That divine Spirit is more than an influence. 'He shall teach,' and He can be grieved by evil and sin. I do not enlarge upon these thoughts. My purpose is mainly to bring them out clearly before you.

II. I pass in the second place to the consideration of the Lesson which this promised Teacher gives.

Mark the words, 'He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' Now as we have seen in the exposition of the words 'in My name,' the whole

subject-matter of the divine Spirit's teaching is the life and work and death and person of Jesus Christ. 'He shall teach you all things' is wider than 'He shall bring all things which I have said to you to your remembrance.' But whilst that is so, the clear implication of the words before us is that Christ is the lesson book, of which the divine Spirit is the Teacher. His weapon, to take another metaphor, with which He plies men's hearts and minds and wills, convincing the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, and leading those who are convinced into deeper knowledge and larger wisdom, is the recorded facts concerning the life and manifestation of Jesus Christ.

The significance of this lesson book, the history of our Lord, cannot be unfolded all at once. There is something altogether unique in the incorruption and germinant power of all His deeds and of all His words. This Carpenter of Nazareth has reached the heights which the greatest thinkers and poets of the past have never reached, or only in little snatches and fragments of their words. *His* words open out, generation after generation, into undreamed-of wisdom, and there are found to be hived in them stores of sweetness that were never suspected until the occasion came that drew them forth. The world and the Church received Christ, as it were, in the dark; and, as with some man receiving a precious gift as the morning was dawning, each fresh moment revealed, as the light grew, new beauties and new preciousness in the thing possessed. So Christ, in His infinite significance, fresh and new for all generations, was given at first, and ever since the Church and the world have been learning the meaning of the gift which they received. Christ's words are inexhaustible.

and the Spirit's teaching is to unveil more and more of the infinite significance that lies in the apparently least significant of them.

Now, then, note that if this be our Lord's meaning here, Jesus Christ plainly anticipated that, after His departure from earth, there should be a development of Christian doctrine. We are often taunted with the fact, which is exaggerated for the purpose of controversy, that a clear and full statement of the central truths which orthodox Christianity holds, is found rather in the Apostolic epistles than in the Master's words, and the shallow axiom is often quoted with great approbation: 'Jesus Christ is our Master, and not Paul.' I do not grant that the germs and the central truths of the Gospel are not to be found in Christ's words, but I admit that the full, articulate statement of them is to be found rather in the servant's letters, and I say that that is exactly what Jesus Christ told us to expect, that after He was gone, words that had been all obscure, and thoughts that had been only fragmentarily intelligible, would come to be seen clearly, and would be discerned for what they were. The earlier disciples had only a very partial grasp of Christ's nature. They knew next to nothing of the great doctrine of sacrifice; they knew nothing about His resurrection; they did not in the least understand that He was going back to heaven; they had but glimmering conceptions of the spirituality or universality of His Kingdom. Whilst they were listening to Him at that table they did not believe in the atonement; but they dimly believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ; they did not believe in His resurrection; they did not believe in His ascension; they did not believe that He was founding a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom

that was to rule over all the world till the end of time. None of these truths were in their mind. They had all been in germ in His words. And after He was gone, there came over them a breath of the teaching Spirit, and the unintelligible flashed up into significance. The history of the Church is the proof of the truth of this promise, and if anybody says to me, 'Where is the fulfilment of the promise of a Spirit that will bring all things to your remembrance?' I say—here in this Book! These four Gospels, these Apostolic Epistles, show that the word which our Lord here speaks has been gloriously fulfilled. Christ anticipated a development of doctrine, and it casts no slur or suspicion on the truthfulness of the apostolic representation of the Christian truths, that they are only sparsely and fragmentarily to be found in the records of Christ's life.

Then there is another practical conclusion from the words before us, on which I touch for a moment, and that is, that if Jesus Christ and the deep understanding of Him be the true lesson of the divine, teaching Spirit, then real progress consists, not in getting beyond Christ, but in getting more fully into Him. We hear a great deal in these days about advanced thought and progressive Christianity. I hope I believe in the continuous advance of Christian thought as joyfully as any man, but my notion of it—and I humbly venture to say Christ's notion of it—is to get more and more into His heart, and to find within Him, and not away from Him, 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' We leave all other great men behind. All other teachers' words become feeble by age, as their persons become ghostly, wrapped in thickening folds of oblivion; but the progress of the Church consists in absorbing more and more of Christ, in understanding Him better, and

becoming more and more moulded by His influence. The Spirit's teaching brings out the ever fresh significance of the ancient and perpetual revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

III. And now, lastly, note the Scholars.

Primarily, of course, these are the Apostolic group but the Apostles, in all these discourses, stand as the representatives of the Church, and not as separated from it. And whilst the teaching Spirit could 'bring to the remembrance' of those only who first heard them 'the words that He said unto them,' that Spirit's teaching function is not limited to those who listened to the Lord Jesus. The fire that was kindled on Pentecost has not died down into grey ashes, nor the river that then broke forth been sucked up by thirsty sands of successive generations, but the fire is still with us, and the river still flows near our lips, and we, too, may be taught by that divine Spirit. For this very Evangelist, in writing his Epistle, has at least two distinct references to, and almost verbal quotations of, this promise, when he says, addressing all his Asiatic brethren, 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.' And again, 'The unction which ye have of Him abideth with you, and ye need not that any man should teach you.'

So, then, Christian men and women, every believing soul has this divine Spirit for His Teacher, and the humblest of us may, if we will, learn of Him and be led by Him into profounder knowledge of that great Lord.

Oh! dear brethren, the belief in the actual presence with the Church of a Spirit that teaches all faithful members thereof, is far too much hesitatingly held by the common Christianity of this day. We ought to be the standing witnesses in the world of the reality

of a supernatural influence, and how can we be, if we do not believe it ourselves, and never feel that we are under it?

But whilst a continuous inspiration from that self-same Spirit is the prerogative of all believing souls, let us not forget that the early teaching is the standard by which all such must be tried. As to the first disciples the office of the divine Spirit was to bring before them the deep significance of their Master's life and words, so to us the office of the teaching Spirit is to bring to our minds the deep significance of the record by these earliest scholars of what they learned from Him. The authority of the New Testament over our faith is based upon these words, and Paul's warning applies especially to this generation, with its thoughts about a continuous inspiration and outgrowing of the New Testament teaching: 'If a man think himself to be spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.'

Now from all this take three counsels. Let this great promise fill us with shame. Look at Christendom. Does it not contradict such words as these? Disputatious sects, Christians scarcely agreed upon any one of the great central doctrines, seem a strange fulfilment. The present condition of Christendom does not prove that Jesus Christ did not send the Spirit, but it does prove that Christ's followers have been woefully remiss and negligent in their acceptance and use of the Spirit. What slow scholars we are! How little we have learnt! How we have let passion, prejudice, human voices, the babble of men's tongues, anybody and everybody, take the office of teaching us God's truth, instead of waiting before Him and letting

His Spirit teach us! It is the shame of us Christians that, with such a Teacher, we, 'when for the time we ought to be teachers, have need that one teach us again which be the first principles of the oracles of Christ!'

Let it fill us with desire and with diligence. Let it fill us with calm hope. They tell us that Christianity is effete. Have we got all out of Jesus Christ that is in Him? Is the process that has been going on for all these centuries to stop now? No! Depend upon it that the new problems of this generation will find their solution where the old problems of past generations have found theirs, and the old commandment of the old Christ will be the new commandment of the new Christ.

Foolish men, both on the Christian and on the anti-Christian side, stand and point to the western sky and say, 'The Sun is setting.' But there is a flush in the opposite horizon in an hour, as at midsummer; and that which sank in the west rises fresh and bright in the east for a new day. Jesus Christ is the Christ for all the ages and for every soul, and the world will only learn more and more of His inexhaustible fullness. So let us be ever quiet, patient, hopeful amidst the babble of tongues and the surges of controversy, assured that all change will but make more plain the inexhaustible significance of the infinite Christ, and that humble and obedient hearts will ever possess the promised Teacher, nor ever cry in vain, 'Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God. Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.'

CHRIST'S PEACE

'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'
JOHN xiv. 27.

'PEACE be unto you!' was, and is, the common Eastern salutation, both in meeting and in parting. It carries us back to a state of society in which every stranger might be an enemy. It is a confession of the deep unrest of the human heart. Christ was about closing His discourse, and the common word of leave-taking came naturally to His lips; just as when He first met His followers after the Resurrection, He soothed their fears by the calm and familiar greeting, 'Peace be unto you!' But common words deepen their force and meaning when He uses them. In Him 'all things become new,' and on His lips the conventional threadbare salutation changes into a tender and mysterious communication of a real gift. His words are deeds, and His wishes for His disciples fulfil themselves.

I. So we have here, first, the greeting, which is a gift.

'Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.' We have seen, in former discourses on this chapter, how prominently and repeatedly our Lord insists on the great truth of His dwelling with and in His disciples. He gives His peace because He gives Himself; and in the bestowal of His life He bestows, in so far as we possess the gift, the qualities and attributes of that life. His peace is inseparable from His presence. It comes with Him, like an atmosphere; it is never where He is not. It was His peace inasmuch as, in His own experience, He possessed it. His man-

hood was untroubled by perturbation or tumult, by passions or contending desires, and no outward things could break His calm. If we open our hearts by lowly faith, love, and aspiration for His entrance, we too may be at rest; for His peace, like all which He is and has, is His that it may be ours.

The first requisite for peace is consciousness of harmonious and loving relations between me and God. The deepest secret of Christ's peace was His unbroken consciousness of unbroken communion with the Father, in which His will submitted and the whole being of the man hung in filial dependence upon God. And the centre and foundation of all the peace-giving power of Jesus Christ is this, that in His death, by His one offering for sin for ever, He has swept away the occasion of antagonism, and so made peace between the twain, the Father in the heavens and the child, rebellious and prodigal, here below. Little as these disciples dreamed of it, the death impending, which was already beginning to cast its shadow over their souls, was the condition of securing to them and to us the true beginning of all real peace, the rectifying of our antagonistic relation to God, and the bringing Him and us into perfect concord.

My brother, no man can be at rest down to the very roots of His being, in the absence of the consciousness that he is at peace with God. There may be tumults of gladness, there may be much of stormy brightness in the life, but there cannot be the calm, still, impregnable, all-pervading, and central tranquillity that our souls hunger for, unless we know and feel that we are right with God, and that there is nothing between us and Him. And it is because Jesus Christ, dying on the Cross, has made it possible for you and me to feel this,

that He is our peace, and that He can say, 'Peace I leave with you.'

Another requisite is that we must be at peace with ourselves. There must be no stinging conscience, there must be no unsatisfied desires, there must be no inner schism between inclination and duty, reason and will, passion and judgment. There must be the quiet of a harmonised nature which has one object, one aim, one love; which—to use a very vulgar phrase—has 'all its eggs in one basket,' and has no contradictions running through its inmost self. There is only one way to get that peace—cleaving to Jesus Christ and making Him our Lord, our righteousness, our aim, our all. Your consciences will sting, and that destroys peace; or if they do not sting, they will be torpid, and that destroys peace, for death is not peace. Unless we take Christ for our love, for the light of our minds, for the Sovereign Arbiter and Lord of our will, for the home of our desires, for the aim of our efforts, we shall never know what it is to be at rest. Unsatisfied and hungry we shall go through life, seeking what nothing short of an Infinite Humanity can ever give us, and that is a heart to lean our heads upon, an adequate object for all our faculties, and so a quiet satisfaction of all our desires. 'Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread?' A question that no man can answer without convicting himself of folly! There is One, and only One, who is enough for me, poor and weak and lowly and fleeting as I am, and as my earthly life is. Take that One for your Treasure, and you are rich indeed. The world without Christ is nought. Christ without the world is enough.

Nor is there any other way of healing the inner

discord, schism, and contradiction of our anarchic nature, except in bringing it all into submission to His merciful rule. Look at that troubled kingdom that each of us carries about within himself, passion dragging this way, conscience that, a hundred desires all arrayed against one another, inclination here, duty there, till we are torn in pieces like a man drawn asunder by wild horses. And what is to be done with all that rebellious self, over which the poor soul rules as it may, and rules so poorly? Oh! there is an inner unrest, the necessary fate of every man who does not take Christ for his King. But when He enters the heart with His silken leash, the old fable comes true, and He binds the lions and the ravenous beasts there with its slender tie and leads them along, tamed, by the cord of love, and all harnessed to pull together in the chariot that He guides. There is only one way for a man to be at peace with himself through and through, and that is that he should put the guidance of his life into the hands of Jesus Christ, and let Him do with it as He will. There is one power, and only one, that can draw after it all the multitudinous heaped waters of the weltering ocean, and that is the quiet, silver moon in the heavens that pulls the tidal wave, into which melt and merge all currents and small breakers, and rolls it round the whole earth. And so Christ, shining down lambent, and gentle, but changeless, from the darkest of our skies, will draw, in one great surge of harmonised motion, all the else contradictory currents of our stormy souls. 'My peace I give unto you.'

Another element in true tranquillity, which again is supplied only by Jesus Christ, is peace with men. 'Whence come wars and fightings amongst you?

From your lusts.' Or to translate the old-fashioned phraseology into modern English, the reason why men are in antagonism with one another is the central selfishness of each, and there is only one way by which men's relations can be thoroughly sweetened, and that is, by the divine love of Jesus Christ pouring into their hearts, and casting out the devil of selfishness, and so blending them all into one harmonious whole.

The one basis of true, happy relations between man and man, without which there is not the all-round tranquillity that we require, lies in the common relation of all, if it may be, but certainly in the individual relation of myself, to Him who is the Lover and the Friend of all. And in the measure in which the law of the Spirit of life which was in Jesus Christ is in me, in that measure do I find it possible to reproduce His gentleness, sympathy, compassion, insight into men's sorrows, patience with men's offences, and all which makes, in our relations to one another, the harmony and the happiness of humanity.

Another of the elements or aspects of peace is peace with the outer world. 'It is hard to kick against the pricks,' but if you do not kick against them, they will not prick you. We beat ourselves all bruised and bleeding against the bars of the prison-house in trying to escape from it, but if we do not beat ourselves against them, they will not hurt us. If we do not want to get out of prison, it does not matter though we are locked in. And so it is not external calamities, but the resistance of the will to these, that makes the disturbances of life. Submission is peace, and when a man with Christ in his heart can say what Christ said, 'Not My will, but Thine be done,' Oh! then, some faint

beginnings, at least, of tranquillity come to the most agitated and buffeted; and even in the depths of our sorrow we may have a deeper depth of calm. If we have yielded ourselves to the Father's will, through that dear Son who has set the example and communicates the power of filial obedience, then all winds blow us to our haven, and all 'things work together for good,' and nothing 'that is at enmity with joy' can shake our settled peace. Storms may break upon the rocky shore of our islanded lives, but deep in the centre there will be a secluded, inland dell 'which heareth not the loud winds when they call,' and where no tempest can ever reach. Peace may be ours in the midst of warfare and of storms, for Christ with us reconciles us to God, harmonises us with ourselves, brings us into amity with men, and makes the world all good.

II. So, secondly, note here the world's gift, which is an illusion.

'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' Our Lord contrasts, as it seems to me, primarily the manner of the world's bestowment, and then passes insensibly into a contrast between the character of the world's gifts and His own. That phrase 'the world' may have a double sense. It may mean either mankind in general or the whole external and material frame of things. I think we may use both significations in elucidating the words before us.

Regarding it in the former of them, the thought is suggested—Christ *gives*; men can only *wish*. 'Peace be unto you' comes from many a lip, and is addressed to many an ear, unfulfilled. Christ says 'peace,' and His word is a conveyance. How little we can do for one another's tranquillity, how soon we come to the

limits of human love and human help! How awful and impassable is the isolation in which each human soul lives! After all love and fellowship we dwell alone on our little island in the deep, separated by 'the salt, unplumbed, estranging sea,' and we can do little more than hoist signals of goodwill, and now and then for a moment stretch our hands across the 'echoing straits between.' But it is little after all that husband or wife can do for one another's central peace, little that the dearest friend can give. We have to depend upon ourselves and upon Christ for peace. That which the world wishes Christ gives.

And then, if we take the other signification of the 'world,' and the other application of the whole promise, we may say—Outward things can give a man no real peace. The world is for excitement; Christ alone has the secret of tranquillity. It is as if to a man in a fever a physician should come and say: 'I cannot give you anything to soothe you; here is a glass of brandy for you.' That would not help the fever, would it? The world comes to us and says: 'I cannot give you rest: here is a sharp excitement for you, more highly spiced and titillating for your tongue than the last one, which has turned flat and stale.' That is about the best that it can do.

Oh! what a confession of unrest are the rush and recklessness, the fever and the fret of our modern life with its ever renewed and ever disappointed quest after good! You go about our streets and look men in the face, and you see how all manner of hungry desires and eager wishes have imprinted themselves there. And now and then—how seldom!—you come across a face out of which beams a deep and settled peace. How many of you are there who dare not be quiet because

then you are most troubled? How many of you are there who dare not reflect because then you are wretched? How many of you are uncomfortable when alone, either because you are utterly vacuous, or because then you are surrounded by the ghosts of ugly thoughts that murder sleep and stuff every pillow with thorns? The world will bring you excitement; Christ, and Christ alone will bring you rest.

The peace that earth gives is a poor affair at best. It is shallow; a very thin plating over a depth of restlessness, like some skin of turf on a volcano, where a foot below the surface sulphurous fumes roll, and hellish turbulence seethes. That is the kind of rest that the world brings.

Oh! dear friends, there is nothing in this world that will fill and satisfy your hearts except only Jesus Christ. The world is for excitement; and Christ is the only real Giver of real peace.

III. Lastly, note the duty of the recipients of that peace of Christ's: 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'

The words that introduced this great discourse return again at its close, somewhat enlarged and with a deepened soothing and tenderness. There are two things referred to as the source of restlessness, troubled agitation or disturbance of heart; and that mainly, I suppose, because of terror in the outlook towards a dim and unknown future. The disciples are warned to fight against these if they would keep the gift of peace.

That is to say, casting the exhortation into a more general expression, Christ's gift of peace does not dispense with the necessity for our own effort after tranquillity. There is much in the outer world that

will disturb us to the very end, and there is much within ourselves that will surge up and seek to shake our repose and break our peace; and we have to coerce and keep down the temptations to anxiety, the temptations to undue agitation of desire, the temptations to tumults of sorrow, the temptations to cowardly fears of the unknown future. All these will continue, even though we have Christ's peace in our hearts, and it is for us to see to it that we treasure the peace, 'and in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known unto God,' that nothing may break the calm which we possess.

So, then, another thought arises from this final exhortation, and that is, that it is useless to tell a man, 'Do not be troubled, and do not be afraid,' unless he first has Christ's peace as his. Is that peace yours, my brother, because Jesus Christ is yours? If so, then there is no reason for your being troubled or dreading any future. If it is not, you are mad not to be troubled, and you are insane if you are not afraid. The word for you is, 'Be troubled, ye careless ones,' for there is reason for it, and be afraid of that which is certainly coming. The one thing that gives security and makes it possible to possess a calm heart is the possession of Jesus Christ by faith. Without Him it is a waste of breath to say to people, 'Do not be frightened,' and it is wicked counsel to say to men, 'Be at ease.' They ought to be terrified, and they ought to be troubled, and they will be some day, whether they think so or not.

But then the last thought from this exhortation is—and now I speak to Christian people—your imperfect possession of this peace is all your own fault.

Why, there are hundreds of professing Christian people who have some kind of faint, rudimentary faith, and there are many of them, I dare say, listening to me now, who have no assured possession of any of those elements, of which I have been speaking, as the constituent parts of Christ's peace. You are *not* sure that you are right with God. You do *not* know what it is to possess satisfied desires. You *do* know what it is to have conflicting inclinations and impulses; you have envy and malice and hostility against men; and the world's storms and disasters do strike and disturb you. Why? Because you have not a firm grasp of Jesus Christ. 'I have set the Lord always at my right hand, therefore I shall not be moved'; there is the secret. Keep near Him, my brother; and then all things are fair, and your heart is at peace.

I remember once standing by the side of a little Highland loch on a calm autumn day, when all the winds were still, and every birch-tree stood unmoved, and every twig was reflected on the steadfast mirror, into the depths of which Heaven's own blue seemed to have found its way. That is what our hearts may be, if we let Christ put His guarding hand round them to keep the storms off, and have Him within us for our rest. But the man who does not trust Jesus 'is like the troubled sea which cannot rest,' but goes moaning round half the world, homeless and hungry, rolling and heaving, monotonous and yet changeful, salt and barren—the true emblem of every soul that has not listened to the merciful call, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

JOY AND FAITH, THE FRUITS OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE

'Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.'—JOHN xiv. 28, 29.

OUR Lord here casts a glance backward on the course of His previous words, and gathers together the substance and purpose of these. He brings out the intention of His warnings and the true effect of the departure, concerning which He had given them notice, as being twofold. In the first verse of my text His words about that going away, and the going away itself, are represented as the source of joy, which is an advance on the peace that He had just previously been promising. In the second of our verses these two things—His words, and the facts which they revealed—are represented as being the very ground and nourishment of faith.

So, then, we have these two thoughts to look at now, the departed Lord, the fountain of joy to all who love Him; the departed Lord, the ground and food of faith.

I. The departure of the Lord is a fountain of joy to those who love Him.

In the first part of our text the going away of Jesus is contemplated in two aspects.

The first is that with which we have already become familiar in previous sermons on this chapter—viz., its bearing upon the disciples; and in that respect it is declared that Christ's going is Christ's coming.

But then we have a new aspect, one on which, in His sublime self-repression, He very seldom touches—viz.,

its bearing upon Himself; and in that aspect we are taught here to regard our Lord's going as ministering to His exaltation and joy, and therefore as being a source of joy to all His lovers.

So, then, we have these thoughts, Christ's going is Christ's coming, and Christ's going is Christ's exaltation, and for both reasons that departure ought to minister to His friends' gladness. Let us look at these three things for a little while.

First of all, there comes a renewed utterance of that great thought which runs through the whole chapter, that the departure of Jesus Christ is in reality the coming of Christ. The word 'again' is a supplement, and somewhat restricts and destroys the true flow of thought and meaning of the words. For if we read, as our Authorised Version does, 'I go away and come again unto you,' we are inevitably led to think of a coming, separated by a considerable distance of time from the departure, and for most of us that which is suggested is the final coming and return, in bodily form, of the Lord Jesus.

Now great and glorious as that hope is, it is too far away to be in itself a sufficient comfort to the mourning disciples, and too remote to be for us, if taken alone, a sufficient ground of joy and of rest. But if you strike out the intrusive word '*again*,' and read the sentence as being what it is, a description of one continuous process, of which the parts are so closely connected as to be all but contemporaneous, you get the true idea. 'I go away, and I come to you.' There is no gap, the thing runs on without a break. There is no moment of absolute absence; there are not two motions, one from us and the other back again towards us, but all is one. The 'going' is the 'coming'; the solemn series

of events which began on Calvary, and ended on Olivet, to the eye of sense were successive stages in the departure of Jesus Christ. But looked at with a deeper understanding of their true meaning, they are successive stages in His approach towards us. His death, His resurrection, His ascension, were not steps in the cessation of His presence, but they were simply steps in the transition from a lower to a higher kind of that presence. He changed the limitations and externalities of a mere bodily, local nearness for the realities of a spiritual presence. To the eye of sense, the 'going away' was the reality, and the 'coming' a metaphor. To the eye enlightened to see things as they are, the dropping away of the visible corporeal was but the inauguration of the higher and the more real. And we need to reverse our notions of what is real and what is figurative in Christ's presence, and to feel that that form of His presence which we may all have to-day is far more real than the form which ceased when the Shekinah cloud 'received Him out of their sight,' before we can penetrate to the depth of His words, or grasp the whole fullness of blessing and of consolation which lie in them here. In a very deep and real sense, 'He therefore departed from us for a season that we might receive Him for ever.'

The real presence of Jesus Christ to-day, and through the long ages with every waiting heart, is the very keynote to the solemn music of these chapters. And again I press upon you, and upon myself, the question, Do we believe it? Do we live in the faith of it? Does it fill the same place in the perspective of our Christian creed as it does in the revelation of the Scripture, or have we refined it and watered it down, until it comes to be little more than merely the continuous

influence of the record of His past, just as any great and sovereign spirit that has influenced mankind may still 'rule the nations from his urn'? Or do we take Him at His word, and believe that He meant what He said, in something far other than a violent figure for the continuance of His influence and of the inspiration drawn from Him, 'Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world'? 'Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend up into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above, the Word,' the Incarnate Word, 'is nigh thee, in thy heart,' if thou lovest and trustest Him.

Then, again, the other aspect of our Lord's coming, which is emphasised here, is that in which it is regarded as affecting Himself. Christ's going is Christ's exaltation.

Now observe that, in the first clause of our verse, there is simply specified the fact of departure, without any reference to the 'whither'; because all that was wanted was to contrast the going and the coming. But, in the second clause, in which the emphasis rests not so much upon the fact of departure as upon the goal to which He went, we read: '*I go to the Father.*' Hitherto we have been contemplating Christ's departure simply in its bearing upon us, but here, with exquisite tenderness, He unveils another aspect of it, and that in order that He may change His disciples' sadness into joy; and says to them, 'If ye were not so absorbed in yourselves, you would have a thought to spare about Me, and you would feel that you should be glad because I am about to be exalted.'

Very, very seldom does He open such a glimpse into His heart, and it is all the more tender and impressive when He does. What a hint of the continual self-

sacrifice of the human life of Jesus Christ lies in this thought, that He bids His disciples rejoice with Him, because the time is getting nearer its end, and He goes back to the Father! And what shall we say of the nature of Him to whom it was martyrdom to live, and a supreme instance of self-sacrificing humiliation to be 'found in fashion as a man'?

He tells His followers here that a reason for their joy in His departure is to be found in this fact, that He goes to the Father, who is greater than Himself.

Now mark, with regard to that remarkable utterance, that the whole course of thought in the context requires, as it seems to me, that we should suppose that for Christ to 'go to the Father' was to share in the Father's greatness. Why else should the disciples be bidden to rejoice in it? or why should He say anything at all about the greatness of the Father? If so, then this follows, that the greatness to which He here alludes is such as He enters by His ascension. Or, in other words, that the inferiority, of whatever nature it may be, to which He here alludes, falls away when He passes hence.

Now these words are often quoted triumphantly, as if they were dead against what I venture to call the orthodox and Scriptural doctrine of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it may be worth while to remark that that doctrine accepts this saying as fully as it does Christ's other word, 'I and My Father are one.' I venture to think that it is the only construction of Scripture phraseology which does full justice to all the elements. But be that as it may, I wish to remind you that the creed which confesses the unity of the Godhead and the divinity of Jesus Christ is not to be overthrown by pelting this verse at it; for

this verse is part of that creed, which as fully declares that the Father is greater than the Son, as it declares that the Son is One with the Father. You may be satisfied with it or no, but as a matter of simple honesty it must be recognised that the creed of the Catholic Church does combine both the elements of these representations.

Now we can only speak in this matter as Scripture guides us. The depths of Deity are far too deep to be sounded by our plummets, and he is a bold man who ventures to say that he knows what is impossible in reference to the divine nature. He needs to have gone all round God, and down to the depths, and up to the heights of a bottomless and summitless infinitude, before he has a right to say that. But let me remind you that we can dimly see that the very names 'Father' and 'Son' do imply some sort of subordination, but that that subordination, inasmuch as it is in the timeless and inward relations of divinity, must be supposed to exist after the ascension, as it existed before the incarnation; and, therefore, any such mysterious difference is not that which is referred to here. What is referred to is what dropped away from the Man Jesus Christ, when He ascended up on high. As Luther has it, in his strong, simple way, in one of his sermons, 'Here He was a poor, sad, suffering Christ'; and that garb of lowliness falls from Him, like the mantle that fell from the prophet as he went up in the chariot of fire, when He passes behind the brightness of the Shekinah cloud that hides Him from our sight. That in which the Father was greater than He, in so far as our present purpose is concerned, was that which He left behind when He ascended, even the pain, the suffering, the sorrow, the restrictions,

the humiliation, that made so much of the burden of His life. Therefore we, as His followers, have to rejoice in an ascended Christ, beneath whose feet are foes, and far away from whose human personality are all the ills that flesh is heir to. 'If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I.'

So then the third thought, in this first part of our subject, is that on both these grounds Christ's ascension and departure are a source of joy. The two aspects of His departure, as affecting Him and as affecting us, are inseparably welded together. There can be no presence with us, man by man, through all the ages, and in every land, unless He, whose presence it is, participates in the absolute glory of divinity. For to be with you and me and all our suffering brethren, through the centuries and over the world, involves something more than belongs to mere humanity. Therefore, the two sources of gladness are confluent—Christ's ascension as affecting us is inseparably woven in with Christ's ascension as affecting Himself.

Love will delight to dwell upon that thought of its exalted Lover. We may fairly apply the simplicity of human relationships and affections to the elucidation of what ought to be our affection to Him, our Lord. And surely if our dearest one were far away from us, in some lofty position, our hearts and our thoughts would ever be going thither, and we should live more there than here, where we are 'cribbed, cabined, and confined.' And if we love Jesus Christ with any depth of earnestness and fervour of affection, there will be no thought more sweet to us, and none which will more naturally flow into our hearts, whenever they are for a moment at leisure, than this, the thought

of Him, our Brother and Forerunner, who has ascended up on high; and in the midst of the glory of the throne bears us in His heart, and uses His glory for our blessing. Love will spring to where the beloved is; and if we be Christians in any deep and real sense, our hearts will have risen with Christ, and we shall be sitting with Him at the right hand of God. My brother, measure your Christianity, and the reality of your love to Jesus Christ, by this—is it to you natural, and a joy, to turn to Him, and ever to make present to your mind the glories in which He loves and lives, and intercedes, and reigns, for you? ‘If ye love Me, ye will rejoice, because I go unto the Father.’

II. And now I can deal with the second verse of our text very briefly. For our purpose it is less important than the former one. In it we find our Lord setting forth, secondly, His departure and His announcement of His departure as the ground and food of faith.

He knew what a crash was coming, and with exquisite tenderness, gentleness, knowledge of their necessities, and suppression of all His own feelings and emotions, He gave Himself to prepare the disciples for the storm, that, forewarned, they might be forearmed, and that when it did burst upon them, it might not take them by surprise.

So He does still, about a great many other things, and tells us beforehand of what is sure to come to us, that when we are caught in the midst of the tempest we may not bate one jot of heart or hope.

‘Why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?
He told me no less.’

And when my sorrows come to me, I may say about them what He says about His departure—He has told us before, that when it comes we may believe.

But note how, in these final words of my text, Christ avows that the great aim of His utterances and of His departure is to evoke our faith. And what does He mean by faith? He means, first of all, a grasp of the historic facts—His death, His resurrection, His ascension. He means, next, the understanding of these as He Himself has explained them—a death of sacrifice, a resurrection of victory over death and the grave, and an ascension to rule and guide His Church and the world, and to send His divine Spirit into men's hearts if they will receive it. And He means, therefore, as the essence of the faith that He would produce in all our hearts—a reliance upon Himself as thus revealed, Sacrifice by His death, Victor by His resurrection, King and interceding Priest by His ascension—a reliance upon Himself as absolute as the facts are sure, as unfaltering as is His eternal sameness. The faith that grasps the Christ, dead, risen, ascended, as its all in all, for time and for eternity, is the faith which by all His work, and by all His words about His work, He desires to kindle in our hearts. Has He kindled it in yours?

Then there is a second thought—viz., that these facts, as interpreted by Himself, are the ground and the nourishment of our faith. How differently they looked when seen from the further side and when seen from the hither side! Anticipated and dimly anticipated, they were all doleful and full of dismay; remembered and looked back upon, they were radiant and bright. The disciples felt, with shrinking hearts and fainting spirits, that their whole reliance upon

Jesus Christ was on the point of being shattered, and that everything was going when He died. 'We *trusted*,' said two of them, with such a sad use of the past tense, 'we *trusted* that this *had been* He which should have redeemed Israel. But we do not trust it any more, nor do we expect Him to be Israel's Redeemer now' But after the facts were all unveiled, there came back the memory of His words, and they said to one another, 'Did He not tell us that it was all to be so? How blind we were not to understand Him!'

And so 'the Cross, the grave, the skies,' are the foundations of our faith; and they who see Him dying, rising, ascended, henceforth will find it impossible to doubt. Feed your faith upon these great facts, and take Christ's own explanation of them, and your faith will be strong.

Again, we learn here that faith is the condition of the true presence of our absent Lord. Faith is that on our side which corresponds to His spiritual coming to us. Whosoever trusts Him possesses Him, and He is with and in every soul that, loving Him, relies upon Him, in a closeness so close and a presence so real that heaven itself does not bring the spirit of the believer and the Spirit of the Lord nearer one another, though it takes away the bodily film that sometimes seems to part their lives.

We, too, may and should be glad when we lift our eyes to that Throne where our Brother reigns. We too, may be glad that He is there, because His being there is the reason why He can be here; and we, too, may feed our faith upon Him, and so bring Him in very deed to dwell in our hearts. If we would have Christ within us, let us trust Him dying, rising, living in the heavens; and then we shall learn how, by all

three apparent departures, He is drawing the closer to the souls that love and trust.

CHRIST FORESEEING HIS PASSION

'Hereafter I will not talk much with you : for the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, Let us go hence.'—JOHN xiv. 30, 31.

THE summons to departure which closes these verses shows that we have now reached the end of that sacred hour in the upper room. In obedience to the summons, we have to fancy the little group leaving its safe shelter, as sailors might put out from behind a breakwater into a stormy sea. They pass from its seclusion and peace into the joyous stir of the crowded streets, filled with feast-keeping multitudes, on whom the full paschal moon looked down, pure and calming. Somewhere between the upper chamber and the crossing of the brook Kedron, the divine words of the following chapters were spoken, but this discourse, closely connected as it is with them, reaches its fitting close in these penetrating, solemn words of outlook into the near future, so calm, so weighty, so resolute, so almost triumphant, with which Christ seeks finally to impart to His timorous friends some of His own peace and assurance of victory.

They lead us into a region seldom opened to our view, and never to be looked upon but with reverent awe. For they tell us what Christ thought about His sufferings, and how He felt as He went down to that cold, black river, in which He was to be baptized. 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground.'

So, reverently listening to the words, sacred because of the Speaker, the theme, and the circumstances, we note in them these things: His calm anticipation of the assailant, His unveiling of the secret and motive of His apparent defeat, and His resolute advance to the conflict. Let us look at these three points.

I. First, we have here our Lord's calm anticipation of the assailant.

'Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.' One of the other Gospels tells us, in finishing its account of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, that when Satan had ended all these temptations 'he departed from Him for a season.' And now we have the second and the intenser form of that assault. The first was addressed to desires, and sought to stimulate ambition and ostentation and the animal appetites, and so, through the cravings of human nature, to shake the Master's fixed faith. The second used sharper and more fatal weapons, and appealed, not to desire of enjoyment, or ease, or good, but to the natural human shrinking from pain and suffering and shame and death. He that was impervious on the side of natural necessities and more subtle spiritual desires might yet be reached through terror. And so the second form of the assault, instead of tempting the traveller by the sunshine to cast aside his cloak, tempted him by storm and tempest to fling it aside; and the one, as the other, was doomed to failure.

Note how the Master, with that clear eye which saw to the depths as well as the heights, and before which men and things were but, as it were, transparent *media* through which unseen spiritual powers wrought, just as He discerns the Father's will as

supreme and sovereign, sees here — beneath Judas's treachery, and Pharisees' and priests' envy, and the people's stolid indifference, and the Roman soldiers' impartial scorn—the workings of a personal source and centre of all. The 'Prince of this world,' who rules men and things when they are severed from God, 'cometh.' Christ's sensitive nature apprehends the approach of the evil thing, as some organisations can tell when a thunderstorm is about to burst. His divine Omniscience, working as it did, even within the limits of humanity, knows not only when the storm is about to burst upon Him, but knows who it is that has raised the tempest. And so He says, 'The Prince of this world cometh.'

But note, as yet more important, that tremendous and unique consciousness of absolute invulnerability against the assaults. 'He hath nothing in Me.' He is 'the Prince of the world,' but His dominion stops outside My breast. He has no rule or authority there. His writs do not run, nor is His dominion recognised, within that sacred realm.

Was there ever a man who could say that? Are there any of us, the purest and the noblest, who, standing single-handed in front of the antagonistic power of evil, and believing it to be consolidated and consecrated in a person, dare to profess that there is not a thing in us on which he can lay his black claw and say—'That is mine?' Is there nothing inflammable within us which the 'fiery darts of the wicked' can kindle? Are there any of us who bar our doors so tightly as that we can say that none of his seductions will find their way therein, and that nothing there will respond to them? Christ sets Himself here against the whole embattled and embodied

power of evil, and puts Himself in contrast to the universal human experience, when He calmly declares 'He hath nothing in Me.' It is an assertion of His absolute freedom from sinfulness, and it involves, as I take it, the other assertion—that as He is free from sin, so He is not subject to that consequence of sin, which is death, as we know it. Another part of Scripture speaks to us in strange language, which yet has in it a deep truth, of 'him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Men fall under the rightful dominion of the king of evil when they sin, and part of the proof of his dominion is the fact of physical death, with its present accompaniments. Thus, in His calm anticipation, Jesus stands waiting for the enemy's charge, knowing that all its forces will be broken against the serried ranks of His immaculate purity, and that He will come from the dreadful close unwounded all, and triumphant for evermore.

But do not let us suppose that because Christ, in His anticipation of suffering and death, knew Himself invulnerable, with not even a spot on His heel into which the arrow could go, therefore the conflict was an unreal or shadowy one. It was a true fight, and it was a real struggle that He was anticipating, thus calmly in these solemn words, as knowing Himself the Victor ere He entered on the dreadful field.

II. So note, secondly, in these words, our Lord's unveiling of the motive and aim of His apparent defeat.

'But that the world might know that I love the Father, and, as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.' There may be some uncertainty about the exact grammatical relation of these clauses to one

another, with which I need not trouble you, because it does not affect their substantial meaning. However we solve the mere grammatical questions, the fundamental significance of the whole remains unaffected, and it is this: that Christ's sufferings and death were, in one aspect, for the purpose that the world might know His love to the Father, and, in another aspect, were obedience to the Father's commandment. And if we consider these two aspects, I think we shall get some thoughts worth considering as to the way in which the Master Himself looks upon these sufferings and that death.

The first point I note in this division of my discourse is, that Christ would have us regard His sufferings and His death as His own act. Note that remarkable phrase, 'thus I *do*.' A strange word to be used in such a connection, but full of profound meaning. We speak, and rightly, of the solemn events of these coming days as the passion of our Lord, but they were His action quite as much as His passion. He was no mere passive sufferer. In them all He acted, or, as He says here, we may look upon them all, not as things inflicted upon Him from without by any power, however it might seem to have the absolute control of His fate, but as things which He did Himself.

There is one Man who died, not of physical necessity, but because of free choice. There is one Man who chose to be born, and who chose to die; who, in His choosing to be born, chose humiliation, and who, in choosing to die, chose yet deeper humiliation. This sacrifice was a voluntary sacrifice, or, to speak more accurately, He was both Priest and Sacrifice, when 'through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot unto God.' The living Christ is the Lord of

Life, and lives because He will ; the dying Christ is the Lord of Death, and dies because He chose. He would have us learn that all His bitter sufferings, inflicted from without as they were, and traceable to a deeper source than merely human antagonism, were also self-inflicted and self-chosen, and further traceable to the Father's will in harmony with His own. 'Thus I do,' and thus He did when He died.

Then, further, our Lord would have us regard these sufferings and that death as being His crowning act of obedience to His Father's will. That is in accordance with the whole tone of His self-consciousness, especially as set before us in this precious Gospel of John, which traces up everything to the submission of the divine Son to the divine Father, a submission which is no mere external act, but results from, and is the expression of, the absolute unity of will and the perfect oneness of mutual love. And so, because He loved the Father, therefore He came to do the Father's will, and the crowning act of His obedience was this, that He was 'obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.' It was a voluntary sacrifice, but that voluntariness was not self-will. It was a sacrifice in obedience to the Father's will, but that obedience was not reluctant. Christ was the embodiment of the divine purpose, formed before the ages and realised in time, when He bowed His head and yielded up the ghost. The highest proof of His filial obedience was the Cross. And to it He points us, if we would know what it is to love and obey the Father.

Now it is to be noticed that this motive of our Lord's death is not the usual one given in Scripture. And I can suppose the question being put, 'Why did not Jesus Christ say, in that supreme moment, that He

went to the Cross because of His love to us rather than because of His love to the Father?' But I think the answer is not far to seek. There are several satisfactory ones which may be given. One is that this making prominent of His love to God rather than to us, as the motive for His death, is in accordance with that comparative reticence on the part of Jesus as to the atoning aspect of His death, which I have had frequent occasion to point out, and which does not carry in it the implication that that doctrine was a new thing in the Christian preaching after Pentecost. Another reason may be drawn from the whole strain and tone of this chapter, which, as I have already said, traces up everything to the loving relations of obedience between the Father and Son. And yet another reason may be given in that the very statement of Christ's love to God, and loving obedience to the Father's commandment as the motive of His death, includes in it necessarily the other thing—love to us. For what was the Father's commandment which Christ with all His heart accepted, and with His glad will obeyed unto death? It was that the Son should come as the Ransom for the world. The Son of man was sent, 'not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a Ransom for many.' Or, as He Himself said, in one of His earliest discourses, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.' And for what He gave that Son is clearly stated in the context itself of that passage—'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.'

To speak of Christ's acceptance of the Father's commandment, then, is but another way of saying

that Christ, in all the fullness of His self-surrender, entered into and took as His own the great, eternal divine purpose, that the world should be redeemed by His death upon the Cross. The heavenward side of His love to man is His love to the Father, God.

Now there is another aspect still in which our Lord would here have us regard His sufferings and death, and that is that they are of worldwide significance.

Think for a moment of the obscurity of the speaker, a Jewish peasant in an upper room, with a handful of poor men around Him, all of them ready to forsake Him, within a few hours of His ignominious death; and yet He says, 'I am about to die, that the echo of it may reverberate through the whole world.' He puts Himself forth as of worldwide significance, and His death as adapted to move mankind, and as one day to be known all over the world. There is nothing in history to approach to the gigantic arrogance of Jesus Christ, and it is only explicable on the ground of His divinity.

'This I do that *the world* may know.' And what did it matter to the world? Why should it be of any importance that the world should know? For one plain reason, because true knowledge of the true nature and motive of that death breaks the dominion of the Prince of this world, and sets men free from his tyranny. Emancipation, hope, victory, purity, the passing from the tyranny of the darkness into the blessed kingdom of the light—all depend on the world's knowing that Christ's death was His own voluntary act of submission to the infinite love and will of the Father, which will and love He made His own, and therefore died, the sacrifice for the world's sin.

The enemy was approaching. He was to be hoist with his own petard. 'He digged a pit; he digged it deep,' and into the pit which he had digged he himself fell. 'Oh, death! I will be thy plague' by entering into thy realm. 'Oh, grave! I will be thy destruction' by dwelling for a moment within thy dark portals and rending them irreparably as I pass from them. The Prince of this world was defeated when he seemed to triumph, and Christ's mighty words came true: 'Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out.' He would have the world know—with the knowledge which is of the heart as well as the head, which is life as well as understanding, which is possession and appropriation—the mystery, the meaning, the motive of His death, because the world thereby ceases to be a world, and becomes the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

III. Lastly, notice here the resolute advance to the conflict.

'Arise, let us go hence'—a word of swift alacrity. Evidently He rose to His feet whilst they lay round the table. He bids them rise with Him and follow Him on the path.

But there is more in the words than the mere close of a conversation, and a summons to change of place. They indicate a kind of divine impatience to be in the fight, and to have it over. The same emotion is plainly revealed in the whole of the latter days of our Lord's life. You remember how His disciples followed amazed, as He strode up the road from Jericho, hastening to His Cross. You remember His deliberate purpose to draw upon Himself public notice during that dangerous and explosive week before the Passover, as shown in the publicity of His entry into Jerusalem, His sharp rebukes of the rulers in the Temple, and in every other

incident of those days. You remember His words to the betrayer: 'That thou doest, do quickly.' These latter hours of the Lord were strongly marked by the emotion to which He gave utterance in His earlier words: 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' Perhaps that feeling indicated His human shrinking; for we all know how we sometimes are glad to precipitate an unwelcome thing, and how the more we dread it, the more we are anxious to get it over. But there is far more than that in it. There is the resolved determination to carry out the Father's purpose for the world's salvation, which was His own purpose, and was none the less His though He knew all the suffering which it involved.

Let us adore the steadfast will, which never faltered, though the natural human weakness was there too, and which, as impelled by some strong spring, kept persistently pressing towards the Cross that on it He might die, the world's Redeemer.

And do not let us forget that He summoned His lovers and disciples to follow Him on the road. 'Let us go hence.' It is ours to take up our cross daily and follow the Master, to do with persistent resolve our duty, whether it be welcome or unwelcome, and to see to it that we plant no faltering and reluctant foot in our Master's footsteps. For us, too, if we have learned to flee to the Cross for our redemption and salvation, the resolve of our Redeemer and the very passion of the Saviour itself become the pattern and law of our lives. We, too, have to cast ourselves into the fight, and to take up our cross, 'that the world may know that we love the Father, and as the Father hath given us commandment.' And if we so live, then our

death, too, in some humble measure, may be like His —the crowning act of obedience to the Father's will; in which we are neither passively nor resistingly dragged under by a force that we cannot effectually resist, but in which we go down willingly into the dark valley where death 'makes our sacrifice complete.'

EXPOSITIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D., Litt. D.

ST. JOHN

Chaps. XV to XXI

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THE TRUE VINE

'I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.'—JOHN xv. 1-4.

WHAT suggested this lovely parable of the vine and the branches is equally unimportant and undiscoverable. Many guesses have been made, and, no doubt, as was the case with almost all our Lord's parables, some external object gave occasion for it. It is a significant token of our Lord's calm collectedness, even at that supreme and heart-shaking moment, that He should have been at leisure to observe, and to use for His purposes of teaching, something that was present at the instant. The deep and solemn lessons which He draws, perhaps from some vine by the wayside, are the richest and sweetest clusters that the vine has ever grown. The great truth in this chapter, applied in manifold directions, and viewed in many aspects, is that of the living union between Christ and those who believe on Him, and the parable of the vine and the branches affords the foundation for all which follows.

We take the first half of that parable now. It is somewhat difficult to trace the course of thought in it, but there seems to be, first of all, the similitude set forth, without explanation or interpretation, in its most general terms, and then various aspects in which its applications to Christian duty are taken up and

reiterated. I simply follow the words which I have read for my text.

I. We have then, first, the Vine in the vital unity of all its parts.

‘I am the True Vine,’ of which the material one to which He perhaps points, is but a shadow and an emblem. The reality lies in Him. We shall best understand the deep significance and beauty of this thought if we recur in imagination to some of those great vines which we sometimes see in royal conservatories, where for hundred of yards the pliant branches stretch along the espaliers, and yet one life pervades the whole, from the root, through the crooked stem, right away to the last leaf at the top of the farthest branch, and reddens and mellows every cluster. ‘So,’ says Christ, ‘between Me and the totality of them that hold by Me in faith there is one life, passing ever from root through branches, and ever bearing fruit.’

Let me remind you that this great thought of the unity of life between Jesus Christ and all that believe upon Him is the familiar teaching of Scripture, and is set forth by other emblems besides that of the vine, the queen of the vegetable world; for we have it in the metaphor of the body and its members, where not only are the many members declared to be parts of one body, but the name of the collective body, made up of many members, is Christ. ‘So also is’—not as we might expect, ‘the Church,’ but—‘Christ,’ the whole bearing the name of Him who is the Source of life to every part. Personality remains, individuality remains: I am I, and He is He, and thou art thou; but across the awful gulf of individual consciousness which parts us from one another, Jesus Christ assumes the Divine prerogative of passing and joining Himself

to each of us, if we love Him and trust Him, in a union so close, and with a communication of life so real, that every other union which we know is but a faint and far-off adumbration of it. A oneness of life from root to branch, which is the sole cause of fruitfulness and growth, is taught us here.

And then let me remind you that that living unity between Jesus Christ and all who love Him is a oneness which necessarily results in oneness of relation to God and men, in oneness of character, and in oneness of destiny. In relation to God, He is *the* Son, and we in Him receive the standing of sons. He has access ever into the Father's presence, and we through Him and in Him have access with confidence and are accepted in the Beloved. In relation to men, since He is Light, we, touched with His light, are also, in our measure and degree, the lights of the world; and in the proportion in which we receive into our souls, by patient abiding in Jesus Christ, the very power of His Spirit, we, too, become God's anointed, subordinately but truly His messiahs, for He Himself says: 'As the Father hath sent Me, even so I send you.'

In regard to character, the living union between Christ and His members results in a similarity if not identity of character, and with His righteousness we are clothed, and by that righteousness we are justified, and by that righteousness we are sanctified. The oneness between Christ and His children is the ground at once of their forgiveness and acceptance, and of all virtue and nobleness of life and conduct that can ever be theirs.

And, in like manner, we can look forward and be sure that we are so closely joined with Him, if we love Him and trust Him, that it is impossible but that

where He is there shall also His servants be; and that what He is that shall also His servants be. For the oneness of life, by which we are delivered from the bondage of corruption and the law of sin and death here, will never halt nor cease until it brings us into the unity of His glory, 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' And as He sits on the Father's throne, His children must needs sit with Him, on His throne.

Therefore the name of the collective whole, of which the individual Christian is part, is Christ. And as in the great Old Testament prophecy of the Servant of the Lord, the figure that rises before Isaiah's vision fluctuates between that which is clearly the collective Israel and that which is, as clearly, the personal Messiah; so the 'Christ' is not only the individual Redeemer who bears the body of the flesh literally here upon earth, but the whole of that redeemed Church, of which it is said, 'It is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.'

II. Now note, secondly, the Husbandman, and the dressing of the vine.

The one tool that a vinedresser needs is a knife. The chief secret of culture is merciless pruning. And so says my text, 'The Father is the Husbandman.' Our Lord assumes that office in other of His parables. But here the exigencies of the parabolic form require that the office of Cultivator should be assigned only to the Father; although we are not to forget that the Father, in that office, works through and in His Son.

But we should note that the one kind of husbandry spoken of here is pruning—not manuring, not digging, but simply the hacking away of all that is rank and all that is dead.

Were you ever in a greenhouse or in a vineyard at the season of cutting back the vines? What flagitious waste it would seem to an ignorant person to see scattered on the floor the bright green leaves and the incipient clusters, and to look up at the bare stem, bleeding at a hundred points from the sharp steel. Yes! But there was not a random stroke in it all, and there was nothing cut away which it was not loss to keep and gain to lose; and it was all done artistically, scientifically, for a set purpose—that the plant might bring forth more fruit.

Thus, says Christ, the main thing that is needed—not, indeed, to improve the life in the branches, but to improve the branches in which the life is—is excision. There are two forms of it given here—absolutely dead wood has to be cut out; wood that has life in it, but which has also rank shoots, that do not come from the all-pervading and hallowed life, has to be pruned back and deprived of its shoots.

It seems to me that the very language of the metaphor before us requires us to interpret the fruitless branches as meaning all those who have a mere superficial, external adherence to the True Vine. For, according to the whole teaching of the parable, if there be any real union, there will be some life, and if there be any life, there will be some fruit, and, therefore, the branch that has no fruit has no life, because it has no real union. And so the application, as I take it, is necessarily to those professing Christians, nominal adherents to Christianity or to Christ's Church, people that come to church and chapel, and if you ask them to put down in the census paper what they are, will say that they are Christians—Churchmen or Dissenters, as the case may be—but who have

no real hold upon Jesus Christ, and no real reception of anything from Him; and the 'taking away' is simply that, somehow or other, God makes visible, what is a fact, that they do not belong to Him with whom they have this nominal connection.

The longer Christianity continues in any country, the more does the Church get weighted and lowered in its temperature by the aggregation round about it of people of that sort. And one sometimes longs and prays for a storm to come, of some sort or other, to blow the dead wood out of the tree, and to get rid of all this oppressive and stifling weight of sham Christians that has come round every one of our churches. 'His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor,' and every man that has any reality of Christian life in him should pray that this pruning and cutting out of the dead wood may be done, and that He would 'come as a refiner's fire and purify' His priesthood.

Then there is the other side, the pruning of the fruitful branches. We all, in our Christian life, carry with us the two natures—our own poor miserable selves, and the better life of Jesus Christ within us. The one flourishes at the expense of the other; and it is the Husbandman's merciful, though painful work, to cut back unsparingly the rank shoots that come from self, in order that all the force of our lives may be flung into the growing of the cluster which is acceptable to Him.

So, dear friends, let us understand the meaning of all that comes to us. The knife is sharp and the tendrils bleed, and things that seem very beautiful and very precious are unsparingly shorn away, and we are left bare, and, as it seems to ourselves, impoverished

But Oh! it is all sent that we may fling our force into the production of fruit unto God. And no stroke will be a stroke too many or too deep if it helps us to that. Only let us take care that we do not let regrets for the vanished good harm us just as much as joy in the present good did, and let us rather, in humble submission of will to His merciful knife, say to Him, 'Cut to the quick, Lord! if only thereby my fruit unto Thee may increase.'

III. Lastly, we have here the branches abiding in the Vine, and therefore fruitful.

Our Lord deals with the little group of His disciples as incipiently and imperfectly, but really, cleansed through 'the word which He has spoken to them,' and gives them His exhortation towards that conduct through which the cleansing and the union and the fruitfulness will all be secured. 'Now ye are clean: abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me.'

Union with Christ is the condition of all fruitfulness. There may be plenty of activity and yet barrenness. Works are not fruit. We can bring forth a great deal 'of ourselves,' and because it is of ourselves it is nought. Fruit is possible only on condition of union with Him. He is the productive source of it all.

There is the great glory and distinctive blessedness of the Gospel. Other teachers come to us and tell us how we ought to live, and give us laws, patterns and examples, reasons and motives for pure and noble lives. The Gospel comes and gives us life, if we will take it, and unfolds itself in us into all the virtues that we have to possess. What is the use of giving a man a copy if he cannot copy it? Morality comes and

stands over the cripple, and says to him, 'Look here! This is how you ought to walk,' and he lies there, paralysed and crippled, after as before the exhibition of what graceful progression is. But Christianity comes and bends over him, and lays hold of his hand, and says, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk,' and his feet and ankle bones receive strength, and 'he leaps, and walks, and praises God.' Christ gives more than commandments, patterns, motives; He gives the power to live soberly, righteously, and godly, and in Him alone is that power to be found.

Then note that our reception of that power depends upon our own efforts. 'Abide in Me and I in you.' Is that last clause a commandment as well as the first? How can His abiding in us be a duty incumbent upon us? But it is. And we might paraphrase the intention of this imperative in its two halves, by—Do you take care that you abide in Christ, and that Christ abides in you. The two ideas are but two sides of the one great sphere; they complement and do not contradict each other. We dwell in Him as the part does in the whole, as the branch does in the vine, recipient of its life and fruit-bearing energy. He dwells in us as the whole does in the part, as the vine dwells in the branch, communicating its energy to every part; or as the soul does in the body, being alive equally in every part, though it be sight in the eyeball, and hearing in the ear, and colour in the cheek, and strength in the hand, and swiftness in the foot.

'Abide in Me and I in you.' So we come down to very plain, practical exhortations. Dear brethren, suppress yourselves, and empty your lives of self, that

the life of Christ may come in. A lock upon a canal, if it is empty, will have its gates pressed open by the water in the canal and will be filled. Empty the heart and Christ will come in. 'Abide in Him' by continual direction of thought, love, desire to Him; by continual and reiterated submission of the will to Him, as commanding and as appointing; by the honest reference to Him of daily life and all petty duties which otherwise distract us and draw us away from Him. Then, dwelling in Him we shall share in His life, and shall bring forth fruit to His praise.

Here is encouragement for us all. To all of us, sometimes, our lives seem barren and poor; and we feel as if we had brought forth no fruit to perfection. Let us get nearer to Him and He will see to the fruit. Some poor stranded sea-creature on the beach, vainly floundering in the pools, is at the point of death; but the great tide comes, leaping and rushing over the sands, and bears it away out into the middle deeps for renewed activity and joyous life. Let the flood of Christ's life bear you on its bosom, and you will rejoice and expatiate therein.

Here is a lesson of solemn warning to professing Christians. The lofty mysticism and inward life in Jesus Christ all terminate at last in simple, practical obedience; and the fruit is the test of the life. 'Depart from Me, I never knew you, ye that work iniquity.'

And here is a lesson of solemn appeal to us all. Our only opportunity of bearing any fruit worthy of our natures and of God's purpose concerning us is by vital union with Jesus Christ. If we have not that, there may be plenty of activity and mountains of work in our lives, but there will be no fruit. Only that is fruit

which pleases God and is conformed to His purpose concerning us, and all the rest of our busy doings is no more the fruit a man should bear than cankers are roses, or than oak-galls are acorns. They are but the work of a creeping grub, and diseased excrescences that suck into themselves the juices that should swell the fruit. Open your hearts to Christ and let His life and His Spirit come into you, and then you will have 'your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'

THE TRUE BRANCHES OF THE TRUE VINE

'I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.—JOHN xv. 5-8.

No wise teacher is ever afraid of repeating himself. The average mind requires the reiteration of truth before it can make that truth its own. One coat of paint is not enough, it soon rubs off. Especially is this true in regard to lofty spiritual and religious truth, remote from men's ordinary thinkings, and in some senses unwelcome to them. So our Lord, the great Teacher, never shrank from repeating His lessons when He saw that they were but partially apprehended. It was not grievous to Him to 'say the same things,' because for them it was safe. He broke the bread of life into small pieces, and fed them little and often.

So here, in the verses that we have to consider now, we have the repetition, and yet not the mere repetition, of the great parable of the vine, as teaching the union of Christians with Christ, and their consequent fruit-

fulness. He saw, no doubt, that the truth was but partially dawning upon His disciples' minds. Therefore He said it all over again, with deepened meaning, following it out into new applications, presenting further consequences, and, above all, giving it a more sharp and definite personal application.

Are we any swifter scholars than these first ones were? Have we absorbed into our own thinking this truth so thoroughly and constantly, and wrought it out in our lives so completely, that we do not need to be reminded of it any more? Shall we not be wise if we faithfully listen to His repeated teachings?

The verses which I have read give us four aspects of this great truth of union with Jesus Christ; or of its converse, separation from Him. There is, first, the fruitfulness of union; second, the withering and destruction of separation; third, the satisfaction of desire which comes from abiding in Christ; and, lastly, the great, noble issue of fruitfulness, in God's glory, and our own increasing discipleship. Now let me touch upon these briefly.

I. First, then, our Lord sets forth, with no mere repetition, the same broad idea which He has already been insisting upon—viz., that union with Him is sure to issue in fruitfulness. He repeats the theme, 'I am the Vine'; but He points its application by the next clause, 'Ye are the branches.' That had been implied before, but it needed to be said more definitely. For are we not all too apt to think of religious truth as swinging *in vacuo* as it were, with no personal application to ourselves, and is not the one thing needful in regard to the truths which are most familiar to us, to bring them into close connection with our own personal life and experience?

'I am the Vine' is a general truth, with no clear personal application. 'Ye are the branches' brings each individual listener into connection with it. How many of us there are, as there are in every so-called Christian communion, that listen pleasedly, and, in a fitful sort of languid way, interestedly, to the most glorious and most solemn words that come from a preacher's lips, and never dream that what he has been saying has any bearing upon themselves! And the one thing that is most of all needed with people like some of you, who have been listening to the truth all your days, is that it should be sharpened to a point, and the conviction driven into you, that *you* have some personal concern in this great message. 'Ye are the branches' is the one side of that sharpening and making definite of the truth in its personal application, and the other side is, 'Thou art the man.' All preaching and religious teaching is toothless generality, utterly useless, unless we can manage somehow or other to force it through the wall of indifference and vague assent to a general proposition, with which 'Gospel-hardened hearers' surround themselves, and make them feel that the thing has got a point, and that the point is touching their own consciousness. 'Ye are the branches.'

Note next the great promise of fruitfulness. 'He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.'

I need not repeat what I have said in former sermons as to the plain, practical duties which are included in that abiding in Christ, and Christ's consequent abiding in us. It means, on the part of professedly Christian people, a temper and tone of mind very far remote from the noisy, bustling distractions too common in

our present Christianity. We want quiet, patient waiting within the veil. We want stillness of heart, brought about by our own distinct effort to put away from ourselves the strife of tongues and the pride of life. We want activity, no doubt, but we want a wise passiveness as its foundation.

‘Think you, midst all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?’

Get away into the ‘secret place of the Most High,’ and rise into a higher altitude and atmosphere than the region of work and effort; and sitting still with Christ, let His love and His power pour themselves into your hearts. ‘Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee.’ Get away from the jangling of politics, and empty controversies and busy distractions of daily duty. The harder our toil necessarily is, the more let us see to it that we keep a little cell within the central life where in silence we hold communion with the Master. ‘Abide in Me and I in you.’

That is the way to be fruitful, rather than by efforts after individual acts of conformity and obedience, howsoever needful and precious these are. There is a deeper thing wanted than these. The best way to secure Christian conduct is to cultivate communion with Christ. It is better to work at the increase of the central force than at the improvement of the circumferential manifestations of it. Get more of the sap into the branch, and there will be more fruit. Have more of the life of Christ in the soul, and the conduct and the speech will be more Christlike. We may cultivate individual graces at the expense of the

harmony and beauty of the whole character. We may grow them artificially and they will be of little worth—by imitation of others, by special efforts after special excellence, rather than by general effort after the central improvement of our nature and therefore of our life. But the true way to influence conduct is to influence the springs of conduct; and to make a man's life better, the true way is to make the man better. First of all be, and then do; first of all receive, and then give forth; first of all draw near to Christ, and then there will be fruit to His praise. That is the Christian way of mending men, not tinkering at this, that, and the other individual excellence, but grasping the secret of total excellence in communion with Him.

Our Lord is here not merely laying down a law, but giving a promise, and putting his veracity into pawn for the fulfilment of it. 'If a man will keep near Me,' He says, 'he shall bear fruit.'

Notice that little word which now appears for the first time. 'He shall bear *much* fruit.' We are not to be content with a little fruit; a poor shrivelled bunch of grapes that are more like marbles than grapes, here and there, upon the half-nourished stem. The abiding in Him will produce a character rich in manifold graces. 'A little fruit' is not contemplated by Christ at all. God forbid that I should say that there is no possibility of union with Christ and a little fruit. Little union will have little fruit; but I would have you notice that the only two alternatives which come into Christ's view here are, on the one hand, 'no fruit,' and on the other hand, 'much fruit.' And I would ask why it is that the average Christian man of this generation bears only a berry or two here and there, like such as are left upon the vines after the vintage, when the

promise is that if he will abide in Christ, he will bear much fruit?

This verse, setting forth the fruitfulness of union with Jesus, ends with the brief, solemn statement of the converse—the barrenness of separation—‘Apart from Me’ (not merely ‘without,’ as the Authorised Version has it) ‘ye can do nothing.’ *There* is the condemnation of all the busy life of men which is not lived in union with Jesus Christ. It is a long row of figures which, like some other long rows of algebraic symbols added up, amount just to *zero*. ‘Without me, nothing.’ All your busy life, when you come to sum it up, is made up of plus and minus quantities, which precisely balance each other, and the net result, unless you are in Christ, is just nothing; and on your gravestones the only right epitaph is a great round cypher. ‘He did not do anything. There is nothing left of his toil; the whole thing has evaporated and disappeared.’ That is life apart from Jesus Christ.

II. And so note, secondly, the withering and destruction following separation from Him.

Commentators tell us, I think a little prosaically, that when our Lord spoke, it was the time of pruning the vine in Palestine, and that, perhaps, as they went from the upper room to the garden, they might see in the valley, here and there, the fires that the labourers had kindled in the vineyards to burn the loppings of the vines. That does not matter. It is of more consequence to notice how the solemn thought of withering and destruction forces itself, so to speak, into these gracious words; and how, even at that moment, our Lord, in all His tenderness and pity, could not but let words of warning—grave, solemn, tragical—drop from His lips.

This generation does not like to hear them, for its conception of the Gospel is a thing with no minor notes in it, with no threatenings, a proclamation of a deliverance, and no proclamation of anything from which deliverance is needed—which is a strange kind of Gospel! But Jesus Christ could not speak about the blessedness of fruitfulness and the joy of life in Himself without speaking about its necessary converse, the awfulness of separation from Him, of barrenness, of withering, and of destruction.

Separation is withering. Did you ever see a hawthorn bough that children bring home from the woods, and stick in the grate; how in a day or two the little fresh green leaves all shrivel up and the white blossoms become brown and smell foul, and the only thing to be done with it is to fling it into the fire and get rid of it? 'And so,' says Jesus Christ, 'as long as a man holds on to Me and the sap comes into him, he will flourish, and as soon as the connection is broken, all that was so fair will begin to shrivel, and all that was green will grow brown and turn to dust, and all that was blossom will droop, and there will be no more fruit any more for ever.' Separate from Christ, the individual shrivels, and the possibilities of fair buds wither and set into no fruit, and no man is the man he might have been unless he holds by Jesus Christ and lets His life come into him.

And as for individuals, so for communities. The Church or the body of professing Christians that is separate from Jesus Christ dies to all noble life, to all high activity, to all Christlike conduct, and, being dead, rots.

Withering means destruction. The language of our text is a description of what befalls the actual branches

of the literal vine; but it is made a representation of what befalls the individuals whom these branches represent, by that added clause, 'like a branch.' Look at the mysteriousness of the language. 'They gather them.' Who? 'They cast them into the fire.' Who have the tragic task of flinging the withered branches into some mysterious fire? All is left vague with unexplained awfulness. The solemn fact that the withering of manhood by separation from Jesus Christ requires, and ends in, the consuming of the withered, is all that we have here. We have to speak of it pityingly, with reticence, with terror, with tenderness, with awe lest it should be our fate.

But O, dear brethren! be on your guard against the tendency of the thinking of this generation, to paste a bit of blank paper over all the threatenings of the Bible, and to blot out from its consciousness the grave issues that it holds forth. One of two things must befall the branch, either it is in the Vine or it gets into the fire. If we would avoid the fire let us see to it that we are in the Vine.

III. Thirdly, we have here the union with Christ as the condition of satisfied desires.

'If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' Notice how our Lord varies His phraseology here, and instead of saying 'I in you,' says 'My words in you.' He is speaking about prayers, consequently the variation is natural. In fact, His abiding in us is largely the abiding of His words in us; or, to speak more accurately, the abiding of His words in us is largely the means of His abiding in us.

What is meant by Christ's words abiding in us? Something a great deal more than the mere intellectual

acceptance of them. Something very different from reading a verse of the Gospels of a morning before we go to our work, and forgetting all about it all the day long ; something very different from coming in contact with Christian truth on a Sunday, when somebody else preaches to us what he has found in the Bible, and we take in a little of it. It means the whole of the conscious nature of a man being, so to speak, saturated with Christ's words ; his desires, his understanding, his affections, his will, all being steeped in these great truths which the Master spoke. Put a little bit of colouring matter into the fountain at its source, and you will have the stream dyed down its course for ever so far. See that Christ's words be lodged in your inmost selves, by patient meditation upon them, by continual recurrence to them, and all your life will be glorified and flash into richness of colouring and beauty by their presence.

The main effect of such abiding of the Lord's words in us which our Lord touches upon here is, that in such a case, if our whole inward nature is influenced by the continual operation upon it of the words of the Lord, then our desires will be granted. Do not so vulgarise and lower the nobleness and the loftiness of this great promise as to suppose that it only means—If you remember His words you will get anything you like. It means something a great deal better than that. It means that if Christ's words are the substratum, so to speak, of your wishes, then your wishes will harmonise with His will, and so 'ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

Christ loves us a great deal too well to give to our own foolish and selfish wills the keys of His treasure-house. The condition of our getting what we will is our will.

ing what He desires; and unless our prayers are a great deal more the utterance of the submission of our wills to His than they are the attempt to impose ours upon Him, they will not be answered. We get our wishes when our wishes are moulded by His word.

IV. The last thought that is here is that this union and fruitfulness lead to the noble ends of glorifying God and increasing discipleship.

‘Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.’ Christ’s life was all for the glorifying of God. The lives which are ours in name—but being drawn from Him, in their depths are much rather the life of Christ in us than our lives—will have the same end and the same issue.

Ah, dear brethren, we come here to a very sharp test for us all. I wonder how many of us there are, on whom men looking think more loftily of God and love Him better, and are drawn to Him by strange longings. How many of us are there about whom people will say, ‘There must be something in the religion that makes a man like that’? How many of us are there, to look upon whom suggests to men that God, who can make such a man, must be infinitely sweet and lovely? And yet that is what we should all be—mirrors of the divine radiance, on which some eyes, that are too dim and sore to bear the light as it streams from the Sun, may look, and, beholding the reflection, may learn to love. Does God so shine in me that I lead men to magnify His name? If I am dwelling with Christ it will be so.

I shall not know it. ‘Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone’; but, in meek unconsciousness of the glory that rays from us, we may walk the earth, reflecting the light and making God known to our fellows.

And if thus we abide in Him and bear fruit we shall

'be,' or (as the word might more accurately be rendered), we shall '*become* His disciples.' The end of our discipleship is never reached on earth: we never so much *are* as we are in the process of *becoming*, His true followers and servants.

If we bear fruit because we are knit to Him, the fruit itself will help us to get nearer Him, and so to be more His disciples and more fruitful. Character produces conduct, but conduct rests on character, and strengthens the impulses from which it springs. And thus our action as Christian men and women will tell upon our inward lives as Christians, and the more our outward conduct is conformed to the pattern of Jesus Christ, the more shall we love Him in our inmost hearts. We ourselves shall eat of the fruit which we ourselves have borne to Him.

The alternatives are before us—in Christ, living and fruitful; out of Christ, barren, and destined to be burned. As the prophet says, 'Will men take of the wood of the vine for any work?' Vine-wood is worthless, its only use is to bear fruit; and if it does not do that, there is only one thing to be done with it, and that is, 'They cast it into the fire, and it is burned.'

ABIDING IN LOVE

'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.'—JOHN XV. 9-11.

THE last of these verses shows that they are to be taken as a kind of conclusion of the great parable of the Vine and the branches, for it looks back and declares Christ's purpose in His preceding utterances.

The parable proper is ended, but the thoughts of it still linger in our Lord's mind, and echo through His words, as the vibration of some great bell after the stroke has ceased. The main thoughts of the parable were these two, that participation in Christ's life was the source of all good, and that abiding in Him was the means of participation in His life. And these same thoughts, though modified in their form, and free from the parabolical element, appear in the words that we have to consider on this occasion. The parable spoke about abiding in Christ; our text defines that abiding, and makes it still more tender and gracious by substituting for it, 'abiding in His love.' The parable spoke of conduct as 'fruit,' the effortless result of communion with Jesus. Our text speaks of it with more emphasis laid on the human side, as 'keeping the commandments.' The parable told us that abiding in Christ was the condition of bearing fruit. Our text tells us the converse, which is also true, that bearing fruit, or keeping the commandments, is the condition of abiding in Christ. So our Lord takes His thought, as it were, and turns it round before us, letting us see both sides of it, and then tells us that He does all this for one purpose, which in itself is a token of His love, namely, that our hearts may be filled with perfect and perennial joy, a drop from the fountain of His own.

These three verses have three words which may be taken as their key-notes—love, obedience, joy. We shall look at them in that order.

I. First, then, we have here the love in which it is our sweet duty to abide. 'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide ye in My love.'

What shall we say about these mysterious and pro-

found first words of this verse? They carry us into the very depths of divinity, and suggest for us that wonderful analogy between the relation of the Father to the Son, and that of the Son to His disciples, which appears over and over again in the solemnities of these last hours and words of Jesus. Christ here claims to be, in a unique and solitary fashion, the Object of the Father's love, and He claims to be able to love like God. 'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you'; as deeply, as purely, as fully, as eternally, and with all the unnameable perfectnesses which must belong to the divine affection, does Christ declare that He loves us.

I know not whether the majesty and uniqueness of His nature stand out more clearly in the one or in the other of these two assertions. As beloved of God, and as loving like God, He equally claims for Himself a place which none other can fill, and declares that the love which falls on us from His pierced and bleeding heart is really the love of God.

In this mysterious, awful, tender, perfect affection He exhorts us to abide. That comes yet closer to our hearts than the other phrase of which it is the modification, and in some sense the explanation. The command to abide in Him suggests much that is blessed, but to have all that mysterious abiding in Him resolved into abiding in His love is infinitely tenderer, and draws us still closer to Himself. Obviously, what is meant is not our continuance in the attitude of love to Him, but rather our continuance in the sweet and sacred atmosphere of His love to us. For the connection between the two halves of the verse necessarily requires that the love in which we are to abide should be identical with the love which

had been previously spoken of, and *that* is clearly His love to us, and not ours to Him. But then, on the other hand, whosoever thus abides in Christ's love to Him will echo it back again, in an equally continuous love to Him. So that the two things flow together, and to abide in the conscious possession of Christ's love to me is the certain and inseparable cause of its effect, my abiding in the continual exercise and outgoing of my love to Him.

Now note that this continuance in Christ's love is a thing in our power, since it is commanded. Although it is His affection to us of which my text primarily speaks, I can so modify and regulate the flow of that divine love to my heart that it becomes my duty to continue in Christ's love to me.

What a quiet, blessed home that is for us! The image, I suppose, that underlies all this sweet speech in these last hours, about dwelling in Christ, in His joy, in His words, in His peace, and the like, is that of some safe house, into which going, we may be secure. And what sorrow or care or trouble or temptation would be able to reach us if we were folded in the protection of that strong love, and always felt that it was the fortress into which we might continually resort? They who make their abode there, and dwell behind those firm bastions, need fear no foes, but are lifted high above them all. 'Abide in My love,' for they who dwell within the clefts of that Rock need none other defence; and they to whom the riven heart of Christ is the place of their abode are safe, whatsoever befalls. 'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide ye in My love.'

II. Now note, secondly, the obedience by which we continue in Christ's love.

The analogy, on which He has already touched, is still continued. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.' Note that Christ here claims for Himself absolute and unbroken conformity with the Father's will, and consequent uninterrupted and complete communion with the Father's love. It is the utterance of a nature conscious of no sin, of a humanity that never knew one instant's film of separation, howsoever thin, howsoever brief, between Him and the Father. No more tremendous words were ever spoken than these quiet ones in which Jesus Christ declares that never, all His life long, had there been the smallest deflection or want of conformity between the Father's will and *His* desires and doings, and that never had there been one grain of dust, as it were, between the two polished plates which adhered so closely in inseparable union of harmony and love.

And then notice, still further, how Christ here, with His consciousness of perfect obedience and communion, intercepts *our* obedience and diverts it to Himself. He does not say, 'Obey God as I have done, and He will love you'; but He says, 'Obey *Me* as I obey God, and *I* will love you.' Who is this that thus comes between the child's heart and the Father's? Does He come *between* when He stands thus? or does He rather lead us up to the Father, and to a share in His own filial obedience?

He further assures us that, by keeping His commandments, we shall continue in that sweet home and safe stronghold of His love. Of course the keeping of the commandments is something more than mere outward conformity by action. It is the inward

harmony of will, and the bowing of the whole nature. It is, in fact, the same thing (though considered under a different aspect, and from a somewhat different point of view), as He has already been speaking about as the 'fruit' of the vine, by the bearing of which the Father is glorified. And this obedience, the obedience of the hands because the heart obeys, and does so because it loves, the bowing of the will in glad submission to the loved and holy will of the heavens—this obedience is the condition of our continuing in Christ's love.

He will love us better, the more we obey His commandments, for although His tender heart is charged towards all, even the disobedient, with the love of pity and of desire to help, He cannot but feel a growing thrill of satisfied and gratified affection towards us, in the measure in which we become like Himself. The love that wept over us, when we were enemies, will 'rejoice over us with singing,' when we are friends. The love that sought the sheep when it was wandering will pour itself yet more tenderly and with selecter gifts upon it when it follows in the footsteps of the flock, and keeps close at the heels of the Good Shepherd. 'If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love,' so we will put nothing between us and Him which will make it impossible for the tenderest tenderness of that holy love to come to your hearts.

The obedience which we render for love's sake will make us more capable of receiving, and more blessedly conscious of possessing, the love of Jesus Christ. The lightest cloud before the sun will prevent it from focussing its rays to a burning point on the convex glass. And the small, thin, fleeting, scarcely visible acts of self-will that sometimes pass across our skies

will prevent our feeling the warmth of that love upon our shrouded hearts. Every known piece of rebellion against Christ will shatter all true enjoyment of His favour, unless we are hopeless hypocrites or self-deceived. The condition of knowing and feeling the warmth and blessedness of Christ's love to me is the honest submission of my nature to His commandments. You cannot rejoice in Jesus Christ unless you do His will. You will have no real comfort and blessedness in your religion unless it works itself out in your daily lives. That is why so many of you know nothing, or next to nothing, about the joy of Christ's felt presence, because you do not, for all your professions, hourly and momentarily regulate and submit your wills to His commandments. Do what He wants, and do it because He wants it, if you wish that His love should fill your hearts.

And, further, we shall continue in His love by obedience, inasmuch as every emotion which finds expression in our daily life is strengthened by the fact that it is expressed. The love which works is love which grows, and the tree that bears fruit is the tree that is healthy and increases. So note how all these deepest things of Christian teaching come at last to a plain piece of practical duty. We talk about the mysticism of John's Gospel, about the depth of these last sayings of Jesus Christ. Yes! they are mystical, they are deep—unfathomably deep, thank God!—but connected by the shortest possible road with the plainest possible duties. 'Let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' It is of no use to talk about communion with Jesus Christ, and abiding in Him, in possession of His love, and all those other properly mystical sides of Christian experience.

unless you verify them for yourselves by the plain way of practice. Doing as Christ bids us, and doing that habitually, and doing it gladly, then, and only then, are we in no danger of losing ourselves on the heights, or of forgetting that Christ's mission has for its last result the influencing of character and of conduct. 'If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.'

III. Lastly, note the joy which follows on this practical obedience. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain,' (or 'might be') 'in you, and that your joy might be full.'

'My joy might be in you'—a strange time to talk of His 'joy.' In half an hour he would be in Gethsemane, and we know what happened there. Was Christ a joyful man? He was a 'Man of sorrows,' but one of the old Psalms says, 'Thou hast loved righteousness . . . therefore God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.' The deep truth that lies there is the same that He here claims as being fulfilled in His own experience, that absolute surrender and submission in love to the beloved commands of a loving Father made Him—in spite of sorrows, in spite of the baptism with which He was baptized, in spite of all the burden and the weight of our sins—the most joyful of men.

This joy He offers to us, a joy coming from perfect obedience, a joy coming from a surrender of self at the bidding of love, to a love that to us seems absolutely good and sweet. There is no joy that humanity is capable of to compare for a moment with that bright, warm, continuous sunshine which floods the soul, that is freed from all the clouds and mists of self and the

darkness of sin. Self-sacrifice at the bidding of Jesus Christ is the recipe for the highest, the most exquisite, the most godlike gladnesses of which the human heart is capable. Our joy will remain if His joy is ours. Then our joy will be, up to the measure of its capacity, ennobled, and filled, and progressive, advancing ever towards a fuller possession of His joy, and a deeper calm of that pure and perennial rapture, which makes the settled and celestial bliss of those who have 'entered into the joy of their Lord.'

Brother! there is only one gladness that is worth calling so—and that is, that which comes to us, when we give ourselves utterly away to Jesus Christ, and let Him do with us as He will. It is better to have a joy that is central and perennial—though there may be, as there will be, a surface of sorrow and care—than to have the converse, a surface of joy, and a black, unsympathetic kernel of aching unrest and sadness. In one or other of these two states we all live. Either we have to say, 'as sorrowful yet always rejoicing,' or we have to feel that 'even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.' Let us choose for ourselves, and let us choose aright, the gladness which coils round the heart, and endures for ever, and is found in submission to Jesus Christ, rather than the superficial, fleeting joys which are rooted on earth and perish with time.

THE ONENESS OF THE BRANCHES

'This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'—JOHN xv. 12, 13.

THE union between Christ and His disciples has been tenderly set forth in the parable of the Vine and

the branches. We now turn to the union between the disciples, which is the consequence of their common union to the Lord. The branches are parts of one whole, and necessarily bear a relation to each other. We may modify for our present purpose the analogous statement of the Apostle in reference to the Lord's Supper, and as He says, 'We being many, are one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread,' so we may say—The branches, being many, are one Vine, for they are all partakers of that one Vine. Of this union amongst the branches, which results from their common inherence in the Vine, the natural expression and manifestation is the mutual love, which Christ here gives as *the* commandment, and commends to us all by His own solemn example.

There are four things suggested to me by the words of our text—the Obligation, the Sufficiency, the Pattern, and the Motive, of Christian love.

I. First, the Obligation of love.

The two ideas of commandment and love do not go well together. You cannot pump up love to order, and if you try you generally produce, what we see in abundance in the world and in the Church, sentimental hypocrisy, hollow and unreal. But whilst that is true, and whilst it seems strange to say that we are commanded to love, still we can do a great deal, directly and indirectly, for the cultivation and strengthening of any emotion. We can either cast ourselves into the attitude which is favourable or unfavourable to it. We can either look at the facts which will create it or at those who will check it. We can go about with a sharp eye for the lovable or for the unlovable in man. We can either consciously war against or lazily acquiesce in our own predominant

self-absorption and selfishness. And in these and in a number of other ways, our feelings towards other Christian people are very largely under our own control, and therefore are fitting subjects for commandment.

Our Lord lays down the obligation which devolves upon all Christian people, of cherishing a kindly and loving regard to all others who find their place within the charmed circle of His Church. It is an obligation because He commands it. He puts Himself here in the position of the absolute Lawgiver, who has the right of entire and authoritative control over men's affections and hearts. And it is further obligatory because such an attitude is the only fitting expression of the mutual relation of Christian men, through their common relation to the Vine. If there be the one life-sap circling through all parts of the mighty whole, how anomalous and how contradictory it is that these parts should not be harmoniously concordant among themselves! However unlike any two Christian people are to each other in character, in culture, in circumstances, the bond that knits those who have the same relations to Jesus Christ one to another is far deeper, far more real, and ought to be far closer, than the bond that knits either of them to the men or women to whom they are likeliest in all these other respects, and to whom they are unlike in this central one. Christian men! you are closer to every other Christian man, down in the depths of your being, however he may be differenced from you by things that are very hard to get over, than you are to the people that you like best, and love most, if they do not participate with you in this common love to Jesus Christ.

I dread talking mere sentiment about this matter, for there is perhaps no part of Christian duty which has been so vulgarised and pawed over by mere unctuous talk, as that of the fellowship that should subsist between all Christians. But I have one plain question to put,—Does anybody believe that the present condition of Christendom, and the relations to one another even of good Christian people in the various churches and communions of our own and of other lands, is the sort of thing that Jesus Christ meant, or is anything like a fair and adequate representation of the deep, essential unity that knits us all together?

We need far more to realise the fact that our emotions towards our brother Christians are not matters in which our own inclinations may have their way, but that there is a simple commandment given to us, and that we are bound to cherish love to every man who loves Jesus Christ. Never mind though he does not hold your theology; never mind though he be very ignorant and narrow as compared with you; never mind though your outlook on the world may be entirely unlike his. Never mind though you be a rich man and he a poor one, or you a poor one and he rich, which is just as hard to get over. Let all these secondary grounds of union and of separation be relegated to their proper subordinate place; and let us recognise this, that the children of one Father are brethren. And do not let it be possible that it shall be said, as so often has been said, and said truly, that 'brethren' in the Church means a great deal less than *brothers* in the world. Lift your eyes beyond the walls of the little sheepfold in which you live, and hearken to the bleating of the flocks away out yonder, and feel —'Other sheep He has which are not of this fold';

and recognise the solemn obligation of the commandment of love.

II. Note, secondly, the Sufficiency of love.

Our Lord has been speaking in a former verse about the keeping of His commandments. Now He gathers them all up into one. 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another.' All duties to our fellows, and all duties to our brethren, are summed up in, or resolved into, this one germinal, encyclopædiacal, all-comprehensive simplification of duty, into the one word 'love.'

Where the heart is right the conduct will be right. Love will soften the tones, will instinctively teach what we ought to be and do; will take the bitterness out of opposition and diversity, will make even rebuke, when needful, only a form of expressing itself. If the heart be right all else will be right; and if there be a deficiency of love nothing will be right. You cannot help anybody except on condition of having an honest, beneficent, and benevolent regard towards him. You cannot do any man in the world any good unless there is a shoot of love in your heart towards him. You may pitch him benefits, and you will neither get nor deserve thanks for them; you may try to teach him, and your words will be hopeless and profitless. The one thing that is required to bind Christian men together is this common affection. That being there, everything will come. It is the germ out of which all is developed. As we read in that great chapter to the Corinthians—the lyric praise of Charity,—all kinds of blessing and sweetness and gladness come out of this. It is the central force which, being present, secures that all shall be right, which, being absent, ensures that all shall be wrong.

And is it not beautiful to see how Jesus Christ, leaving the little flock of His followers in the world, gave them no other instruction for their mutual relationship? He did not instruct them about institutions and organisations, about orders of the ministry and sacraments, or Church polity and the like. He knew that all these would come. His one commandment was, 'Love one another,' and that will make you wise. Love one another, and you will shape yourselves into the right forms. He knew that they needed no exhortations such as ecclesiastics would have put in the foreground. It was not worth while to talk to them about organisations and officers. These would come to them at the right time and in the right way. The 'one thing needful' was that they should be knit together as true participators of His life. Love was sufficient as their law and as their guide.

III. Note, further, the Pattern of love.

'As I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' Christ sets Himself forward then, here and in this aspect, as He does in all aspects of human conduct and character, as being the realised Ideal of them all. And although the thought is a digression from my present purpose, I cannot but pause for a moment to reflect upon the strangeness of a man thus calmly saying to the whole world, 'I am the embodiment of all that love ought to be. You cannot get beyond Me, nor have anything more pure, more deep, more self-sacrificing, more perfect, than the love which I have borne to you.'

But passing that, the pattern that He proposes for us is even more august than appears at first sight. For, if you remember, a verse or two before our Lord

had said, 'As the Father hath loved Me so I have loved you.' Now He says, 'Love one another as I have loved you.' There stand the three, as it were, the Father, the Son, the disciple. The Son in the midst receives and transmits the Father's love to the disciple, and the disciple is to love his fellows, in some deep and august sense, as the Father loved the Son. The divinest thing in God, and that in which men can be like God, is love. In all our other attitudes to Him we rather correspond than copy. His fullness is met by our emptiness, His giving by our recipiency, His faithfulness by our faith, His command by our obedience, His light by our eye. But here it is not a case of correspondence only, but of similarity. My faith *answers* God's gift to me, but my love is *like* God's love. 'Be ye, therefore, imitators of God as beloved children'; and having received that love into your hearts, *ray* it out, 'and walk in love as God also hath loved us.'

But then our Lord here, in a very wonderful manner, sets forth the very central point of His work, even His death upon the Cross for us, as being the pattern to which our poor affection ought to aspire, and after which it must tend to be conformed. I need not remind you, I suppose, that our Lord here is not speaking of the propitiatory character of His death, nor of the issues which depend upon it, and upon it alone, viz., the redemption and salvation of the world. He is not speaking, either, of the peculiar and unique sense in which He lays down His life for us, His friends and brethren, as none other can do. He is speaking about it simply in its aspect of being a voluntary surrender, at the bidding of love, for the good of those whom He loved, and that, He

tells us—that, and nothing else—is the true pattern and model towards which all our love is bound to tend and to aspire. That is to say, the heart of the love which He commands is self-sacrifice, reaching to death if death be needful. And no man loves as Christ would have him love who does not bear in his heart affection which has so conquered selfishness that, if need be, he is ready to die.

The expression of Christian life is not to be found in honeyed words, or the indolent indulgence in benevolent emotion, but in self-sacrifice, modelled after that of Christ's sacrificial death, which is imitable by us.

Brethren, it is a solemn obligation, which may well make us tremble, that is laid on us in these words, 'As I have loved you.' Calvary was less than twenty-four hours off, and He says to us, '*That* is your pattern!' Contrast our love at its height with His—a drop to an ocean, a poor little flickering rushlight held up beside the sun. My love, at its best, has so far conquered my selfishness that now and then I am ready to suffer a little inconvenience, to sacrifice a little leisure, to give away a little money, to spend a little dribble of sympathy upon the people who are its objects. Christ's love nailed Him to the Cross, and led Him down from the throne, and shut for a time the gates of the glory behind Him. And He says, 'That is your pattern!'

Oh, let us bow down and confess how His word, which commands us, puts us to shame, when we think of how miserably we have obeyed.

Remember, too, that the restriction which here seems to be cast around the flow of His love is not a restriction in reality, but rather a deepening of it. He

says, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' But evidently He calls them so from His point of view, and as He sees them, not from their point of view, as they see Him—that is to say, He means by 'friends' not those who love Him, but those whom He loves. The 'friends' for whom He dies are the same persons as the Apostle, in his sweet variation upon the words of my text, has called by the opposite name, when He says that He died for His 'enemies.'

There is an old, wild ballad that tells of how a knight found, coiling round a tree in a dismal forest, a loathly dragon breathing out poison; and how, undeterred by its hideousness and foulness, he cast his arms round it and kissed it on the mouth. Three times he did it undisgusted, and at the third the shape changed into a fair lady, and he won his bride. Christ 'kisses with the kisses of His mouth' His enemies, and makes them His friends because He loves them. 'If He had never died for His enemies,' says one of the old fathers, 'He would never have possessed His friends.' And so He teaches us here in what seems to be a restriction of the purpose of His death and the sweep of His love, that the way by which we are to meet even alienation and hostility is by pouring upon it the treasures of an unselfish, self-sacrificing affection which will conquer at the last.

Christ's death is the pattern for our lives as well as the hope of our hearts.

IV. Lastly, we have here by implication, though not by direct statement, the Motive of the love.

Surely that, too, is contained in the words, 'As I have loved you.' Christ's commandment of love is a new commandment, not so much because it is a revelation

of a new duty, though it is the casting of an old duty into new prominence, as because it is not merely a revelation of an obligation, but the communication of power to fulfil it. The novelty of Christian morality lies here, that in its law there is a self-fulfilling force. We have not to look to one place for the knowledge of our duty, and somewhere else for the strength to do it, but both are given to us in the one thing, the gift of the dying Christ and His immortal love.

That love, received into our hearts, will conquer, and it alone will conquer, our selfishness. That love, received into our hearts, will mould, and it alone will mould, them into its own likeness. That love, received into our hearts, will knit, and it alone will knit, all those who participate in it into a common bond, sweet, deep, sacred, and all-victorious.

And so, brethren, if we would know the blessedness and the sweetness of victory over these miserable, selfish hearts of ours, and to walk in the liberty of love, we can only get it by keeping close to Jesus Christ. In any circle, the nearer the points of the circumference are to the centre, the closer they will necessarily be to one another. As we draw nearer, each for himself, to our Centre, we shall feel that we have approximated to all those who stand round the same centre, and draw from it the same life. In the early spring, when the wheat is green and young, and scarcely appears above the ground, it comes up in the lines in which it was sown, parted from one another and distinctly showing their separation and the furrows. But when the full corn in the ear waves on the autumn plain, all the lines and separations have disappeared, and there is one unbroken tract of sunny fruitfulness. And so when the life in Christ is low

and feeble, His servants may be separated and drawn up in rigid lines of denominations, and churches, and sects; but as they grow the lines disappear. If to the churches of England to-day there came a sudden accession of knowledge of Christ, and of union with Him, the first thing that would go would be the wretched barriers that separate us from one another. For if we have the life of Christ in any adequate measure in ourselves, we shall certainly have grown up above the fences behind which we began to grow, and shall be able to reach out to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and feel with thankfulness that we are one in Him.

CHRIST'S FRIENDS

'Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.'—JOHN xv. 14-17.

A WONDERFUL word has just dropped from the Master's lips, when He spoke of laying down His life for His friends. He lingers on it as if the idea conveyed was too great and sweet to be taken in at once, and with soothing reiteration He assures the little group that they, even they, are His friends.

I have ventured to take these four verses for consideration now, although each of them, and each clause of them, might afford ample material for a discourse, because they have one common theme. They are a description of what Christ's friends are to Him, of what He is to them, and of what they should be to one another. So they are a little picture, in the

sweetest form, of the reality, the blessedness, the obligations, of friendship with Christ.

I. Notice what Christ's friends do for Him.

'Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' In the former verse, 'friends' means chiefly those whom He loved. Here it means mainly those who love Him. They love Him because He loves them, of course; and the two sides of the one thought cannot be parted. But still in this verse the idea of friendship to Christ is looked at from the human side, and He tells His disciples that they are His lovers as well as beloved of Him, on condition of their doing whatsoever He commands them.

He lingers, as I said, on the idea itself. As if He would meet the doubts arising from the sense of unworthiness, and from some dim perception of how He towers above them, and their limitations, He reiterates, 'Wonderful as it is, you poor men, half-intelligent lovers of Mine, *you* are My friends, beloved of Me, and loving Me, if ye do whatsoever I command you.'

How wonderful that stooping love of His is, which condescends to array itself in the garments of ours! Every form of human love Christ lays His hand upon, and claims that He Himself exercises it in a transcendent degree. 'He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother.' That which is even sacred, the purest and most complete union that humanity is capable of—that, too, He consecrates; for even it, sacred as it is, is capable of a higher consecration, and, sweet as it is, receives a new sweetness when we think of 'the Bride, the Lamb's wife,' and remember the parables in which He speaks of the Marriage Supper of the Great King.

and sets forth Himself as the Husband of humanity. And passing from that Holy of Holies out into this outer court, He lays His hand, too, on that more common and familiar, and yet precious and sacred, thing—the bond of friendship. The Prince makes a friend of the beggar.

Even if we do not think more loftily of Jesus Christ than do those who regard Him simply as the perfection of humanity, is it not beautiful and wonderful that He should look with such eyes of beaming love on that handful of poor, ignorant fishermen, who knew Him so dimly, and say: ‘I pass by all the wise and the mighty, all the lofty and noble, and My heart clings to you poor, insignificant people?’ He stoops to make them His friends, and there are none so low but that they may be His.

This friendship lasts to-day. A peculiarity of Christianity is the strong personal tie of real love and intimacy which will bind men, to the end of time, to this Man that died nineteen hundred years ago. We look back into the wastes of antiquity: mighty names rise there that we reverence; there are great teachers from whom we have learned, and to whom, after a fashion, we are grateful. But what a gulf there is between us and the best and noblest of them! But here is a dead Man, who to-day is the Object of passionate attachment and a love deeper than life to millions of people, and will be till the end of time. There is nothing in the whole history of the world in the least like that strange bond which ties you and me to the Saviour, and the paradox of the Apostle remains a unique fact in the experience of humanity: ‘Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, ye love.’ We stretch out our hands across the waste, silent centuries, and

there, amidst the mists of oblivion, thickening round all other figures in the past, we touch the warm, throbbing heart of our Friend, who lives for ever, and for ever is near us. We here, nearly two millenniums after the words fell on the nightly air on the road to Gethsemane, have them coming direct to our hearts. A perpetual bond unites men with Christ to-day; and for us, as really as in that long-past Paschal night, is it true, 'Ye are My friends.'

There are no limitations in that friendship, no misconstructions in that heart, no alienation possible, no change to be feared. There is absolute rest for us there. Why should I be solitary if Jesus Christ is my Friend? Why should I fear if He walks by my side? Why should anything be burdensome if He lays it upon me and helps me to bear it? What is there in life that cannot be faced and borne—aye, and conquered,—if we have Him, as we all may have Him, for the Friend and the Home of our hearts?

But notice the condition, 'If ye do what I command you.' Note the singular blending of friendship and command, involving on our parts the cultivation of the two things which are not incompatible, absolute submission and closest friendship. He commands though He is Friend; though He commands He is Friend. The conditions that He lays down are the same which have already occupied our attention in former sermons of this series, and so may be touched very lightly. 'Ye are My friends if ye do the things which I command you,' may either correspond with His former saying, 'If a Man love Me he will keep My commandments,' or with His later one, which immediately precedes our text, 'If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love.' For this is the relationship between

love and obedience, in regard to Jesus Christ, that the love is the parent of the obedience, and the obedience is the guard and guarantee of the love. They who love will obey, they who obey will strengthen love by acting according to its dictates, and will be in a condition to feel and realise more the warmth of the rays that stream down upon them, and to send back more fully answering obedience from their hearts. Not in mere emotion, not in mere verbal expression, not in mere selfish realising of the blessings of His friendship, and not in mere mechanical, external acts of conformity, but in the flowing down and melting of the hard and obstinate iron will, at the warmth of His great love, is our love made perfect. The obedience, which is the child and the preserver of love, is something far deeper than the mere outward conformity with externally apprehended commandments. To submit is the expression of love, and love is deepened by submission.

II. Secondly, note what Christ does for His friends.

‘Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth.’ The slave may see what his lord does, but he does not know his purpose in his acts—‘Theirs not to reason why.’ In so far as the relation of master and servant goes, and still more in that of owner and slave, there is simple command on the one side and unintelligent obedience on the other. The command needs no explanation, and if the servant is in his master’s confidence he is more than a servant. But, says Christ, ‘I have called you friends’; and He had called them so before He now named them so. He had called them so in act, and He points to all His past relationship, and especially to the heart-outpourings of the Upper Room, as the proof that He had called them His friends, in the fact that

whatsoever He had heard of the Father He had made known to them.

Jesus Christ, then, recognises the obligation of absolute frankness, and He will tell His friends everything that He can. When He tells them what He can, the voice of the Father speaks through the Son. Every one of Christ's friends stands nearer to God than did Moses at the door of the Tabernacle, when the wondering camp beheld him face to face with the blaze of the Shekinah glory, and dimly heard the thunderous utterances of God as He spake to him 'as a man speaks to his friend.' That was surface-speech compared with the divine depth and fullness of the communications which Jesus Christ deems Himself bound, and assumes Himself able, to make to them who love Him and whom He loves.

Of course to Christ's frankness there are limits. He will not pour out His treasures into vessels that will spill them; and as He Himself says in the subsequent part of this great discourse, 'I have many things to say unto you, but you are not able to carry them now.' His last word was, 'I have declared Thy name unto My brethren, and *will declare* it.' And though here He speaks as if His communication was perfect, we are to remember that it was necessarily conditioned by the power of reception on the part of the hearers, and that there was much yet to be revealed of what God had whispered to Him, ere these men, that clustered round Him, could understand the message.

That frank speech is continued to-day. Jesus Christ recognises the obligation that binds Him to impart to each of us all that each of us is in our inmost spirits capable of receiving. By the light which He sheds on

the Word, by many a suggestion through human lips, by many a blessed thought rising quietly within our hearts, and bearing the token that it comes from a *sacred* source than our poor, blundering minds, He still speaks to us, His friends.

Ought not that thought of the utter frankness of Jesus make us, for one thing, *very* patient, intellectually and spiritually, of the gaps that are left in His communications and in our knowledge? There are so many things that we sometimes think we should like to know, things about that dark future where some of our hearts live so constantly, things about the depths of His nature and the divine character, things about the relation between God's love and God's righteousness, things about the meaning of all this dreadful mystery in which we grope our way. These and a hundred other questionings suggest to us that it would have been so easy for Him to have lifted a little corner of the veil, and let a little more of the light shine out. He holds all in His hand. Why does He thus open one finger instead of the whole palm? Because He loves. A friend exercises the right of reticence as well as the prerogative of speech. And for all the gaps that are left, let us bow quietly and believe that if it had been better for us He would have spoken. 'If it were not so I would have told you.' 'Trust Me! I tell you all that it is good for you to receive.'

And that frankness may well teach us another lesson, viz., the obligation of keeping our ears open and our hearts prepared to receive the speech that does come from Him. Ah, brother! many a message from your Lord flits past you, like the idle wind through an archway, because you are not listening for His voice. If we kept down the noise of that 'household jar

within'; if we silenced passion, ambition, selfishness, worldliness; if we withdrew ourselves, as we ought to do, from the Babel of this world, and 'hid ourselves in His pavilion from the strife of tongues'; if we took less of our religion out of books and from other people, and were more accustomed to 'dwell in the secret place of the Most High,' and to say, 'Speak, Friend! for Thy friend heareth,' we should more often understand how real to-day is the voice of Christ to them that love Him.

'Such rebounds the inward ear
Catches often from afar;
Listen, prize them, hold them dear,
For of God—of God—they are.'

III. Thirdly, notice how Christ's friends come to be so, and why they are so.

'Ye have not chosen,' etc. (verse 16).

Our Lord refers here, no doubt, primarily to the little group of the Apostles; the choice and ordaining as well as 'the fruit that abides,' point, in the first place, to their apostolic office, and to the results of their apostolic labours. But we must widen out the words a great deal beyond that reference.

In all the cases of friendship between Christ and men, the origination and initiation come from Him. 'We love Him because He first loved us.' He has told us how, in His divine alchemy, He changes by the shedding of His blood our enmity into friendship. In the previous verse He has said, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And as I remarked in my last sermon, the friends here are the same as 'the enemies' for whom the Apostle tells us that Christ laid down His life. Since He has thus by the blood of the Cross changed

men's enmity into friendship, it is true universally that the amity between us and Christ comes entirely from Him.

But there is more than that in the words. I do not suppose that any man, whatever his theological notions and standpoint may be, who has felt the love of Christ in his own heart in however feeble a measure, but will say, as the Apostle said, 'I was apprehended of Christ.' It is because He lays His seeking and drawing hand upon us that we ever come to love Him, and it is true that His choice of us precedes our choice of Him, and that the Shepherd always comes to seek the sheep that is lost in the wilderness.

This, then, is how we come to be His friends; because, when we were enemies, He loved us, and gave Himself for us, and ever since has been sending out the ambassadors and the messengers of His love—or, rather, the rays and beams of it, which are parts of Himself—to draw us to His heart. And the purpose which all this forthgoing of Christ's initial and originating friendship has had in view, is set forth in words which I can only touch in the lightest possible manner. The intention is twofold. First, it respects service or fruit. 'That ye may go'; there is deep pathos and meaning in that word. He had been telling them that He was going; now He says to them, 'You are to go. We part here. My road lies upward; yours runs onward. Go into all the world.' He gives them a quasi-independent position; He declares the necessity of separation; He declares also the reality of union in the midst of the separation; He sends *them* out on their course with His benediction, as He does *us*. Wheresoever we go in obedience to His will, we carry the consciousness of His friendship.

'That ye may bring forth fruit'—He goes back for a moment to the sweet emblem with which this chapter begins, and recurs to the imagery of the vine and the fruit. 'Keeping His commandments' does not explain the whole process by which we do the things that are pleasing in His sight. We must also take this other metaphor of the bearing of fruit. Neither an effortless, instinctive bringing forth from the renewed nature and the Christlike disposition, nor a painful and strenuous effort at obedience to His law, describe the whole realities of Christian service. There must be the effort, for men do not grow Christlike in character as the vine grows its grapes; but there must also be, regulated and disciplined by the effort, the inward life, for no mere outward obedience and tinkering at duties and commandments will produce the fruit that Christ desires and rejoices to have. First comes unity of life with Him; and then effort. Take care of modern teachings that do not recognise these two as both essential to the complete ideal of Christian service—the spontaneous fruit-bearing, and the strenuous effort after obedience.

'That your fruit should remain'; nothing corrupts faster than fruit. There is only one kind of fruit that is permanent, incorruptible. The only life's activity that outlasts life and the world is the activity of the men who obey Christ.

The other half of the issues of this friendship is the satisfying of our desires, 'That whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name He may give it you.' We have already had substantially the same promise in previous parts of this discourse, and therefore I may deal with it very lightly. How comes it that it is certain that Christ's friends, living close to Him and bearing fruit, will get what they want? Because what

they want will be 'in His name'—that is to say, in accordance with His disposition and will. Make your desires Christ's, and Christ's yours, and you will be satisfied.

IV. And now, lastly, for one moment, note the mutual friendship of Christ's friends.

We have frequently had to consider that point—the relation of the friends of Christ to each other. 'These things I command you, that ye love one another.' This whole context is, as it were, enclosed within a golden circlet by that commandment which appeared in a former verse, at the beginning of it, 'This is My commandment, that ye love one another,' and reappears here at the close, thus shutting off this portion from the rest of the discourse. Friends of a friend should themselves be friends. We care for the lifeless things that a dear friend has cared for; books, articles of use of various sorts. If these have been of interest to him, they are treasures and precious evermore to us. And here are living men and women, in all diversities of character and circumstances, but with this stamped upon them all—Christ's friends, lovers of and loved by Him. And how can we be indifferent to those to whom Christ is not indifferent? We are knit together by that bond. We are but poor friends of that Master unless we feel that all which is dear to Him is dear to us. Let us feel the electric thrill which ought to pass through the whole linked circle, and let us beware that we slip not our hands from the grasp of the neighbour on either side, lest, parted from them, we should be isolated from Him, and lose some of the love which we fail to transmit.

SHEEP AMONG WOLVES

'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also.'—JOHN xv. 18-20.

THESE words strike a discord in the midst of the sweet music to which we have been listening. The key-note of all that has preceded has been love—the love of Christ's friends to one another, and of all to Him, as an answer to His love to all. That love, which is one, whether it rise to Him or is diffused on the level of earth, is the result of that unity of life between the Vine and the branches, of which our Lord has been speaking such great and wonderful things. But that unity of life between Christians and Christ has another consequence than the spread of love. Just because it binds them to Him in a sacred community, it separates them from those who do not share in His life, and hence the 'hate' of our context is the shadow of 'love'; and there result two communities—to use the much-abused words that designate them—the Church and 'the World'; and the antagonism between these is deep, fundamental, and perpetual.

Unquestionably, our Lord is here speaking with special reference to the Apostles, who, in a very tragic sense, were 'sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.' If we may trust tradition, every one of that little company, Speaker as well as hearers, died a martyr's death, with the exception of John himself, who was preserved from it by a miracle. But, be that as it may, our Lord is here laying down a universal statement of the permanent condition of things; and there is no more

reason for restricting the force of these words to the original hearers of them than there is for restricting the force of any of the rest of this wonderful discourse. 'The world' will be in antagonism to the Church until the world ceases to be a world, because it obeys the King; and then, and not till then, will it cease to be hostile to His subjects.

I. What makes this hostility inevitable?

Our Lord here prepares His hearers for what is coming by putting it in the gentle form of an hypothesis. The frequency with which 'If' occurs in this section is very remarkable. He will not startle them by the bare, naked statement which they, in that hour of depression and agitation, were so little able to endure, but He puts it in the shape of a 'suppose that,' not because there is any doubt, but in order to alleviate the pain of the impression which He desires to make. He says, 'If the world hates,' not 'if the world hate'; and the tense of the original shows that, whilst the form of the statement is hypothetical, the substance of it is prophetic.

Jesus points to two things, as you will observe, which make this hostility inevitable. 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.' And again, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' The very language carries with it the implication of necessary and continual antagonism. For what is 'the world,' in this context, but the aggregate of men, who have no share in the love and life that flow from Jesus Christ? Necessarily they constitute a unity, whatever diversities there may be amongst them, and necessarily, that unity in its banded phalanx is in antagonism, in

some measure, to those who constitute the other unity, which holds by Christ, and has been drawn by Him from 'out of the world.'

If we share Christ's life, we must, necessarily, in some measure, share His fate. It is the typical example of what the world thinks of, and does to, goodness. And all who have 'the Spirit of life which was in Jesus Christ' for the animating principle of their lives, will, just in the measure in which they possess it, come under the same influences which carried Him to the Cross. In a world like this, it is impossible for a man to 'love righteousness and hate iniquity,' and to order his life accordingly, without treading on somebody's corns; being a rebuke to the opposite course of conduct, either interfering with men's self-complacency or with their interests. From the beginning the blind world has repaid goodness by antagonism and contempt.

And then our Lord touches another, and yet closely-connected, cause when He speaks of His selecting the Apostles, and drawing them out of the world, as a reason for the world's hostility. There are two groups, and the fundamental principles that underlie each are in deadly antagonism. In the measure in which you and I are Christians we are in direct opposition to all the maxims which rule the world and make it a world. What we believe to be precious it regards as of no account. What we believe to be fundamental truth it passes by as of little importance. Much which we feel to be wrong it regards as good. Our jewels are its tinsel, and its jewels are our tinsel. We and it stand in diametrical opposition of thought about God, about self, about duty, about life, about death, about the future; and that opposition goes right down to the

bottom of things. However it may be covered over, there is a gulf, as in some of those American cañons: the towering cliffs may be very near—only a yard or two seems to separate them; but they go down for thousands and thousands of feet, and never are any nearer each other, and between them at the bottom a black, sullen river flows. ‘If ye were of the world, the world would love its own.’ If it loves you, it is because ye are of it.

II. And so note, secondly, how this hostility is masked and modified.

There are a great many other bonds that unite men together besides the bonds of religious life or their absence. There are the domestic ties, there are the associations of commerce and neighbourhood, there are surface identities of opinion about many important things. The greater portion of our lives moves on this surface, where all men are alike. ‘If you tickle us, do we not laugh; if you wound us, do we not bleed?’ We have all the same affections and needs, pursue the same avocations, do the same sort of things, and a large portion of every one’s life is under the dominion of habit and custom, and determined by external circumstances. So there is a film of roofing thrown over the gulf. You can make up a crack in a wall with plaster after a fashion, and it will hide the solution of continuity that lies beneath. But let bad weather come, and soon the bricks gape apart as before. And so, as soon as we get down below the surface of things and grapple with the real, deep-lying, and formative principles of a life, we come to antagonism, just as they used to come to it long ago, though the form of it has become quite different.

Then there are other causes modifying this hostility

The world has got a dash of Christianity into it since Jesus Christ spoke. We cannot say that it is half Christianised, but some of the issues and remoter consequences of Christianity have permeated the general conscience, and the ethics of the Gospel are largely diffused in such a land as this. Thus Christian men and others have, to a large extent, a common code of morality, as long as they keep on the surface; and they not only do a good many things exactly alike, but do a great many things from substantially the same motives, and have the same way of looking at much. Thus the gulf is partly bridged over; and the hostility takes another form. We do not wrap Christians in pitch and stick them up for candles in the Emperor's garden nowadays, but the same thing can be done in different ways. Newspaper articles, the light laugh of scorn, the whoop of exultation over the failures or faults of any prominent man that has stood out boldly on Christ's side; all these indicate what lies below the surface, and sometimes not so very far below. Many a young man in a Manchester warehouse, trying to live a godly life, many a workman at his bench, many a commercial traveller in the inn or on the road, many a student on the college benches, has to find out that there is a great gulf between him and the man who sits next to him, and that he cannot be faithful to his Lord, and at the same time, down to the depths of his being, a friend of one who has no friendship to his Master.

Still another fact masks the antagonism, and that is, that after all, the world, meaning thereby the aggregate of godless men, has a conscience that responds to goodness, though grumblingly and reluctantly. After all, men do know that it is better to be good, that it is better and wiser to be like Christ, that it is nobler to

live for Him than for self, and that consciousness cannot but modify to some extent the manifestations of the hostility, but it is there all the same, and whosoever will be a Christian after Christ's pattern will find out that it is there.

Let a man for Christ's sake avow unpopular beliefs, let him try honestly to act out the New Testament, let him boldly seek to apply Christian principles to the fashionable and popular sins of his class or of his country, let him in any way be ahead of the conscience of the majority, and what a chorus will be yelping at his heels! Dear brethren, the law still remains, 'If any man will be a friend of the world he is at enmity with God.'

III. Thirdly, note how you may escape the hostility.

A half-Christianised world and a more than half-secularised Church get on well together. 'When they do agree, their agreement is wonderful.' And it is a miserable thing to reflect that about the average Christianity of this generation there is so very little that does deserve the antagonism of the world. Why should the world care to hate or trouble itself about a professing Church, large parts of which are only a bit of the world under another name? There is no need whatever that there should be any antagonism at all between a godless world and hosts of professing Christians. If you want to escape the hostility drop your flag, button your coat over the badge that shows that you belong to Christ, and do the things that the people round about you do, and you will have a perfectly easy and undisturbed life.

Of course, in the bad old slavery days, a Christianity that had not a word to say about the sin of slaveholding ran no risk of being tarred and feathered. Of

course a Christianity in Manchester that winks hard at commercial immoralities is very welcome on the Exchange. Of course a Christianity that lets beer barrels alone may reckon upon having publicans for its adherents. Of course a Christianity that blesses flags and sings *Te Deums* over victories will get its share of the spoil. Why should the world hate, or persecute, or do anything but despise a Christianity like that, any more than a man need to care for a tame tiger that has had its claws pared? If the world can put a hook in the nostrils of leviathan, and make him play with its maidens, it will substitute good-nature, half contemptuous, for the hostility which our Master here predicts. It was out-and-out Christians that He said the world would hate; the world likes Christians that are like itself. Christian men and women! be you sure that you deserve the hostility which my text predicts.

IV. And now, lastly, note how to meet this antagonism.

Reckon it as a sign and test of true union with Jesus Christ. And so, if ever, by reason of our passing at the call of duty or benevolence outside the circle of those who sympathise with our faith and fundamental ideas, we encounter it more manifestly than when we 'dwell among our own people,' let us count the 'reproach of Christ' as a treasure to be proud of, and to be guarded.

Be sure that it is your goodness and not your evils or your weakness, that men dislike. The world has a very keen eye for the inconsistencies and the faults of professing Christians, and it is a good thing that it has. The loftier your profession the sharper the judgment that is applied to you. Many well-meaning Christian

people, by an injudicious use of Christian phraseology in the wrong place, and by the glaring contradiction between their prayers and their talks and their daily life, bring down a great deal of deserved hostility upon themselves and of discredit upon Christianity; and then they comfort themselves and say they are bearing the 'reproach of the Cross.' Not a bit of it! They are bearing the natural results of their own failings and faults. And it is for us to see to it that what provokes, if it does provoke, hostile judgments and uncharitable criticisms, insulting speeches and sarcasms, and the sense of our belonging to another regiment and having other objects, is our cleaving to Jesus Christ, and not the imperfections and the sins with which we so often spoil that cleaving. Be you careful for this, that it is Christ in you that men turn from, and not you yourself and your weakness and sin.

Meet this antagonism by not dropping your standard one inch. Keep the flag right at the masthead. If you begin to haul it down, where are you going to stop? Nowhere, until you have got it dragging in the mud at the foot. It is of no use to try to conciliate by compromise. All that we shall gain by that will be, as I have said, indifference and contempt; all that we shall gain will be a loss to the cause. A great deal is said in this day, and many efforts are being made—I cannot but think mistaken efforts—by Christian people to bridge over this gulf in the wrong way—that is, by trying to make out that Christianity in its fundamental principles does approximate a great deal more closely to the things that the world goes by than it really does. It is all vain, and the only issue of it will be that we shall have a decaying Christianity and a dying spiritual life. Keep the flag up; emphasise

and accentuate the things that the world disbelieves and denies, not pushing them to the 'falsehood of extremes,' but not by one jot diminishing the clearness of our testimony by reason of the world's unwillingness to receive it. Our victory is to be won only through absolute faithfulness to Christ's ideal.

And, lastly, meet hostility with unmoved, patient, Christlike, and Christ-derived love and sympathy. The patient sunshine pours upon the glaciers and melts the thick-ribbed ice at last into sweet water. The patient sunshine beats upon the mist-cloud and breaks up its edges and scatters it at the last. And our Lord here tells us that our experience, if we are faithful to Him, will be like His experience, in that some will hearken to our word though others will persecute, and to some our testimony will come as a message from God that draws them to the Lord Himself. These are our only weapons, brethren! The only conqueror of the world is the love that was in Christ breathed through us; the only victory over suspicion, contempt, alienation, is pleading, persistent, long-suffering, self-denying love. The only way to overcome the world's hostility is by turning the world into a church, and that can only be done when Christ's servants oppose pity to wrath, love to hate, and in the strength of His life who has won us all by the same process, seek to win the world for Him by the manifestation of His victorious love in our patient love.

Dear brethren, to which army do you belong? Which community is yours? Are you in Christ's ranks, or are you in the world's? Do you love Him back again, or do you meet His open heart with a closed one, and His hand, laden with blessings, with hands clenched in refusal? To which class do I belong?—it is the

question of questions for us all; and I pray that you and I, won from our hatred by His love, and wooed out of our death by His life, and made partakers of His life by His death, may yield our hearts to Him, and so pass from out of the hostility and mistrust of a godless world into the friendships and peace of the sheltering Vine. And then we 'shall esteem the reproach of Christ' if it fall upon our heads, in however modified and mild a form, 'greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,' and 'have respect unto the recompense of the reward.'

May it be so with us all!

THE WORLD'S HATRED, AS CHRIST SAW IT

'But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth Me, hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause.'—JOHN xv. 21-25.

OUR Lord has been speaking of the world's hostility to His followers, and tracing that to its hostility to Himself. In these solemn words of our text He goes still deeper, and parallels the relation which His disciples bear to Him and the consequent hostility that falls on them, with the relation which He bears to the Father and the consequent hostility that falls on Him: 'They hate you because they hate Me.' And then His words become sadder and pierce deeper, and with a tone of wounded love and disappointed effort and almost surprise at the world's requital to Him, He goes on to say, 'They hate Me, because they hate the Father.'

So, then, here we have, in very pathetic and solemn

words, Christ's view of the relation of the world to Him and to God.

1. The first point that He signalises is the world's ignorance.

'These things they will do unto you,' and they will do them 'for My name's sake'; they will do them 'because they know not Him that sent Me.'

'The world,' in Christ's language, is the aggregate of godless men. Or, to put it a little more sharply, our Lord, in this context, gives in His full adhesion to that narrow view which divides those who have come under the influence of His truth into two portions. There is no mincing of the matter in the antithesis which Christ here draws; no hesitation, as if there were a great central mass, too bad for a blessing perhaps, but too good for a curse; which was neither black nor white, but neutral grey. No! however it may be with the masses beyond the reach of the dividing and revealing power of His truth, the men that come into contact with Him, like a heap of metal filings brought into contact with a magnet, mass themselves into two bunches, the one those who yield to the attraction, and the other those who do not. The one is 'My disciples,' and the other is 'the world.' And now, says Jesus Christ, all that mass that stands apart from Him, and, having looked upon Him with the superficial eye of those men round about Him at that day, or of the men who hear of Him now, have no real love to Him—have, as the underlying motive of their conduct and their feelings, a real ignorance of God. 'They know not Him that sent Me.'

Our Lord assumes that He is so completely the Copy and Revealer of the divine nature as that any man that looks upon Him has had the opportunity of

becoming acquainted with God, and that any man who turns away from Him has lost that opportunity. The God that the men who do not love Jesus Christ believe in, is not the Father that sent Him. It is a fragment, a distorted image tinted by the lens. The world has its conception of God; but outside of Jesus Christ and His manifestation of the whole divine nature, the world's God is but a syllable, a fragment, a broken part of the perfect completeness. 'The Father of an infinite majesty,' and of as infinite a tenderness, the stooping God, the pitying God, the forgiving God, the loving God is known only where Christ is accepted. In other hearts He may be dimly hoped for, in other hearts He may be half believed in, in other hearts He may be thought possible; but hopes and anticipations and fears and doubts are not knowledge, and they who see not the light in Christ see but the darkness. Out of Him God is not known, and they that turn away from His beneficent manifestation turn their faces to the black north, from which no sun can shine. Brother, do you know God in Christ? Unless you do, you do not know the God who is.

But there is a deeper meaning in that word than simply the possession of true thoughts concerning the divine nature. We know God as we know one another; because God is a Person, as we are persons, and the only way to know persons is through familiar acquaintance and sympathy. So the world which turns away from Christ has no acquaintance with God.

This is a surface fact. Our Lord goes on to show what lies below it.

II. His second thought here is—the world's ignorance in the face of Christ's light is worse than ignorance; it is sin.

Mark how He speaks : ' If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin : but now they have no cloke for their sin.' And then again : ' If I had not done amongst them the works which none other men did, they had not had sin.' So then He puts before us two forms of His manifestation of the divine nature, by His words and His works. Of these two He puts His words foremost, as being a deeper and more precious and brilliant revelation of what God is than are His miracles. The latter are subordinate, they come as a second source of illumination. Men who will not see the beauty and listen to the truth that lie in His word may perchance be led by His deed. But the word towers in its nature high above the work, and the miracle to the word is but like the picture in the child's book to the text, fit for feeble eyes and infantile judgments, but containing far less of the revelation of God than the sacred words which He speaks. First the words, next the miracles.

But notice, too, how decisively, and yet simply and humbly and sorrowfully, our Lord here makes a claim which, on the lips of any but Himself, would have been mere madness of presumption. Think of any of us saying that our words made all the difference between innocent ignorance and criminality ! Think of any of us saying that to listen to us, and not be persuaded, was the sin of sins ! Think of any of us pointing to our actions and saying, In these God is so manifest that not to see Him augurs wickedness, and is condemnation ! And yet Jesus Christ says all this. And, what is more wonderful, nobody wonders that He says it, and the world believes that He is saying the truth when He says it.

How does that come ? There is only one answer

only one. His words were the illuminating manifestation of God, and His deeds were the plain and unambiguous operation of the divine hand then and there, only because He Himself was divine, and in Him 'God was manifested in the flesh.'

But passing from that, notice how our Lord here declares that in comparison with the sin of not listening to His words, and being taught by His manifestation, all other sins dwindle into nothing. 'If I had not spoken, they had not had sin.' That does not mean, of course, that these men would have been clear of all moral delinquency; it does not mean that there would not have been amongst them crimes against their own consciences, crimes against the law written on their own hearts, crimes against the law of revelation. There were liars, impure men, selfish men, and men committing all the ordinary forms of human transgression amongst them. And yet, says Christ, black and bespattered as these natures are, they are white in comparison with the blackness of the man who, looking into His face, sees nothing there that he should desire. Beside the mountain belching out its sulphurous flame the little pimple of a molehill is nought. And so, says Christ, heaven heads the count of sins with this—unbelief in Me.

Ah, brother, as light grows responsibility grows, and this is the misery of all illumination that comes through Jesus Christ, that where it does not draw a man into His sweet love, and fill him with the knowledge of God which is eternal life, it darkens his nature and aggravates his condemnation, and lays a heavier burden upon his soul. The truth that the measure of light is the measure of guilt has many aspects. It turns a face of alleviation to the dark places of the

earth; but just in the measure that it lightens the condemnation of the heathen, it adds weight to the condemnation of you men and women who are bathed in the light of Christianity, and all your days have had it streaming in upon you. The measure of the guilt is the brightness of the light. No shadows are so black as those which the intense sunshine of the tropics casts. And you and I live in the very tropical regions of divine revelation, and 'if we turn away from Him that spoke on earth and speaketh from heaven, of how much sorer punishment, think you, shall we be thought worthy' than those who live away out in the glimmering twilight of an unevangelised paganism, or who stood by the side of Jesus Christ when they had only His earthly life to teach them?

III. The ignorance which is sin is the manifestation of hatred.

Our Lord has sorrowfully contemplated the not knowing God, which in the blaze of His light can only come from wilful closing of the eyes, and is therefore the very sin of sins. But that, sad as it is, is not all which has to be said about that blindness of unbelief in Him. It indicates a rooted alienation of heart and mind and will from God, and is, in fact, the manifestation of an unconscious but real hatred. It is an awful saying, and one which the lips 'into which grace was poured' could not pronounce without a sigh. But it is our wisdom to listen to what it was His mercy to say.

Observe our Lord's identification of Himself with the Father, so as that the feelings with which men regard Him are, *ipso facto*, the feelings with which they regard the Father God. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' 'He that hath loved Me hath

loved the Father.' 'He that hath hated Me hath hated the Father.' An ugly word—a word that a great many of us think far too severe and harsh to be applied to men who simply are indifferent to the divine love. Some say, 'I am conscious of no hatred. I do not pretend to be a Christian, but I do not hate God. Take the ordinary run of people round about us in the world; if you say God is not in all their thoughts, I agree with you; but if you say that they *hate* God, I do not believe it.'

Well, what do you think the fact that men go through their days and weeks and months and years, and have *not* God in all their thoughts, indicates as to the central feeling of their hearts towards God? Granted that there is not actual antagonism, because there is no thought at all, do you think it would be possible for a man who loved God to go on for a twelvemonth and never think of, or care to please, or desire to be near, the object that he loved? And inasmuch as, deep down at the bottom of our moral being, there is no such thing possible as indifference and a perfect equipoise in reference to God, it is clear enough, I think, that—although the word must not be pressed as if it meant conscious and active antagonism,—where there is no love there is hate.

If a man does not love God as He is revealed to him in Jesus Christ, he neither cares to please Him nor to think about Him, nor does he order his life in obedience to His commands. And if it be true that obedience is the very life-breath of love, disobedience or non-obedience is the manifestation of antagonism, and antagonism towards God is the same thing as hate.

Dear friends, I want some of my hearers to-day who have never honestly asked themselves the question

of what their relation to God is, to go down into the deep places of their hearts and test themselves by this simple inquiry: 'Do I do anything to please Him? Do I try to serve Him? Is it a joy to me to be near Him? Is the thought of Him a delight, like a fountain in the desert or the cool shadow of a great rock in the blazing wilderness? Do I turn to Him as my Home, my Friend, my All? If I do not, am I not deceiving myself by fancying that I stand neutral?' There is no neutrality in a man's relation to God. It is one thing or other. 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.' 'The friendship of the world is enmity against God.'

IV. And now, lastly, note how our Lord here touches the deep thought that this ignorance, which is sin, and is more properly named hatred, is utterly irrational and causeless.

'All this will they do that it might be fulfilled which is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause.' One hears sighing through these words the Master's meek wonder that His love should be so met, and that the requital which He receives at men's hands, for such an unexampled and lavish outpouring of it, should be such a carelessness, reposing upon a hidden basis of such a rooted alienation.

'Without a cause'; yes! that suggests the deep thought that the most mysterious and irrational thing in men's whole history and experience is the way in which they recompense God in Christ for what He has done for them. 'Be astonished, O ye heavens! and wonder, O ye earth!' said one of the old prophets; the mystery of mysteries, which can give no account of itself to satisfy reason, which has no apology, excuse, or vindication, is just that when God loves me I do not love Him back again; and that when Christ pours

out the whole fullness of His heart upon me, my dull and obstinate heart gives back so little to Him who has given me so much.

‘Without a cause.’ Think of that Cross; think, as every poor creature on earth has a right to think, that he and she individually were in the mind and heart of the Saviour when He suffered and died, and then think of what we have brought Him for it. Do we not stand ashamed at—if I might use so trivial a word,—the absurdity as well as at the criminality of our requital? Causeless love on the one side, occasioned by nothing but itself, and causeless indifference on the other, occasioned by nothing but itself, are the two powers that meet in this mystery—men’s rejection of the infinite love of God.

My friend, come away from the unreasonable people, come away from the men who can give no account of their attitude. Come away from those who pay benefits by carelessness, and a Love that died by an indifference that will not cast an eye upon that miracle of mercy, and let His love kindle the answering flame in your hearts. Then you will know God as only they who love Christ know Him, and in the sweetness of a mutual bond will lose the misery of self, and escape the deepening condemnation of those who see Christ on the Cross and do not care for the sight, nor learn by it to know the infinite tenderness and holiness of the Father that sent Him.

OUR ALLY

'But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.'—JOHN xv. 26, 27.

OUR Lord has been speaking of a world hostile to His followers and to Him. He proceeds, in the words which immediately follow our text, to paint that hostility as aggravated even to the pitch of religious murder. But here He lets a beam of light in upon the darkness. These forlorn Twelve, listening to Him, might well have said, 'Thou art about to leave us; how can we alone face this world in arms, with which Thou dost terrify us?' And here He lets them see that they will not be left alone, but have a great Champion, clad in celestial armour, who, coming straight from God, will be with them and put into their hands a weapon, with which they may conquer the world, and turn it into a friend, and with which alone they **must** meet the world's hate.

So, then, we have three things in this text; the great promise of an Ally in the conflict with the world; the witness which that Ally bears, to fortify against the world; and the consequent witness with which Christians may win the world.

I. Now consider briefly the first of these points, the great promise of an Ally in the conflict with the world.

I may touch, very lightly, upon the wonderful designation of this Champion-Friend whom Christ sends, because on former occasions in this course of sermons we have had to deal with the same thoughts, and there

will be subsequent opportunities of recurring to them. But I may just emphasise in a few sentences the points which our Lord here signalises in regard to the Champion whom He sends. There is a double designation of that Spirit, 'the Comforter' and 'the Spirit of truth.' There is a double description of His mission, as being 'sent' by Jesus, and as 'proceeding from the Father,' and there is a single statement as to the position from which He comes to us. A word about each of these things.

I have already explained in former sermons that the notion of 'Comforter,' as it is understood in modern English, is a great deal too restricted and narrow to cover the whole ground of this great and blessed promise. The Comforter whom Christ sends is no mere drier of men's tears and gentle Consoler of human sorrows, but He is a mightier Spirit than that, and the word by which He is described in our text, which means 'one who is summoned to the side of another,' conveys the idea of a helper who is brought to the man to be helped, in order to render whatever aid and succour that man's weakness and circumstances may require. The verses before our text suggest what sort of aid and succour the disciples will need. They are to be as sheep in the midst of wolves. Their defenceless purity will need a Protector, a strong Shepherd. They stand alone amongst enemies. There must be some one beside them to fight for them, to shield and to encourage them, to be their Safety and their Peace. And that Paraclete, who is called to our side, comes for the special help which these special circumstances require, and is a strong Spirit who will be our Champion and our Ally, whatever antagonism may storm against us, and however

strong and well-armed may be the assaulting legions of the world's hate.

Then, still further, the other designation here of this strong Succourer and Friend is 'the Spirit of truth,' by which is designated, not so much His characteristic attribute, as rather the weapon which He wields, or the material with which He works. The 'truth' is His instrument; that is to say, the Spirit of God sent by Jesus Christ is the Strengtheners, the Encourager, the Comforter, the Fighter for us and with us, because He wields that great body of truth, the perfect revelation of God, and man, and duty, and salvation, which is embodied in the incarnation and work of Jesus Christ our Lord. The truth is His weapon, and it is by it that He makes us strong.

Then, still further, there is a twofold description here of the mission of this divine Champion, as 'sent' by Christ, and 'proceeding from the Father.'

In regard to the former, I need only remind you that, in a previous part of this wonderful discourse, our Lord speaks of that divine Spirit as being sent by the Father in His name and in answer to His prayer. The representation here is by no means antagonistic to, or diverse from, that other representation, but rather the fact that the Father and the Son, according to the deep teaching of Scripture, are in so far one as that 'whatsoever the Son seeth the Father do that also the Son doeth likewise,' makes it possible to attribute to Him the work which, in another place, is ascribed to the Father. In speaking of the *Persons* of the Deity, let us never forget that that word is only partially applicable to that ineffable Being, and that whilst with us it implies absolute separation of individuals, it does not mean such separation in

the case of its imperfect transference to the mysteries of the divine nature; but rather, the Son doeth what the Father doeth, and therefore the Spirit is sent forth by the Father, and also the Son sends the Spirit.

But, on the other hand, we are not to regard that divine Spirit as merely a Messenger sent by another. He 'proceeds from the Father.' That word has been the battlefield of theological controversy, with which I do not purpose to trouble you now. For I do not suppose that in its use here it refers at all to the subject to which it has been sometimes applied, nor contains any kind of revelation of the eternal depths of the divine Nature and its relations to itself. What is meant here is the historical coming forth into human life of that divine Spirit. And, possibly, the word 'proceeds' is chosen in order to contrast with the word 'sent,' and to give the idea of a voluntary and personal action of the Messenger, who not only is *sent* by the Father, but of Himself *proceeds* on the mighty work to which He is destined.

Be that as it may, mark only, for the last thought here about the details of this great promise, that wonderful phrase, twice repeated in our Lord's words, and emphasised by its verbal repetition in the two clauses, which in all other respects are so different—'from the Father.' The word translated '*from*' is not the ordinary word so rendered, but rather designates *a position at the side of* than an *origin from*, and suggests much rather the intimate and ineffable union between Father, Son, and Spirit, than the source from which the Spirit comes. I touch upon these things very lightly, and gather them up into one sentence. Here, then, are the points. A Person

who is spoken of as 'He'—a divine Person whose home from of old has been close by the Father's side—a Person whose instrument is the revealed truth en-sphered and in germ in the facts of Christ's incarnation and life—a divine Person, wielding the truth, who is sent by Christ as His Representative, and in some sense a continuance of His personal Presence—a divine, personal Spirit coming from the Father, wielding the truth, sent by Christ, and at the side of all the persecuted and the weak, all world-hated and Christian men, as their Champion, their Combatant, their Ally, their Inspiration, and their Power. Is not that enough to make the weakest strong? Is not that enough to make us 'more than conquerors through Him that loved us'? All nations have legends of the gods fighting at the head of their armies, and through the dust of battle the white horses and the shining armour of the celestial champions have been seen. The childish dream is a historical reality. It is not we that fight, it is the Spirit of God that fighteth in us.

II. And so note, secondly, the witness of the Spirit which fortifies against the world.

'He shall bear witness of Me.' Now we must especially observe here that little phrase, 'unto you.' For that tells us at once that the witness which our Lord has in mind here is something which is done within the circle of the Christian believers, and not in the wide field of the world's history or in nature. Of course it is a great truth that long before Jesus Christ, and to-day far beyond the limits of His name and knowledge, to say nothing of His faith and obedience, the Spirit of God is working. As of old He brooded over the chaotic darkness, ever labouring to turn chaos into order, and

darkness into light, and deformity into beauty; so to-day, all over the field of humanity, He is operating. Grand as that truth is, it is not the truth here. What is spoken of here is something that is done in and on Christian men, and not even through them on the world, but in them for themselves. 'He shall testify of Me' to you.

Now it is to be noted, also, that the first and special application of these words is to the little group listening to Him. Never were men more desolate and beaten down than these were, in the prospect of Christ's departure. Never were men more utterly bewildered and dispirited than these were, in the days between His crucifixion and His resurrection. Think of them during His earthly life, their narrow understandings, their manifold faults, moral as well as intellectual. How little perception they had of anything that He said to them, as their own foolish questions abundantly show! How little they had drunk in His spirit, as their selfish and ambitious janglings amongst themselves abundantly show! They were but Jews like their brethren, believing, indeed, that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, but not knowing what it was that they believed, or of what kind the Messiah was in whom they were thus partially trusting. But they loved Him and were led by Him, and so they were brought into a larger place by the Spirit whom Christ sent.

What was it that made these dwarfs into giants in six weeks? What was it that turned their narrowness into breadth; that made them start up all at once as heroes, and that so swiftly matured them, as the fruits and flowers are ripened under tropical sunshine? The resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ had a great deal to do with the change; but they were not

its whole cause. There is no explanation of the extraordinary transformation of these men as we see them in the pages of the Gospels, and as we find them on the pages of the Acts of the Apostles, except this—the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ as facts, and the Spirit on Pentecost as an indwelling Interpreter of the facts. He came, and the weak became strong, and the foolish wise, and the blind enlightened, and they began to understand—though it needed all their lives to perfect the teaching,—what it was that their ignorant hands had grasped and their dim perceptions had seen, when they touched the hands and looked upon the face of Jesus Christ. The witness of the Spirit of God working within them, working upon what they knew of the historical facts of Christ's life, and interpreting these to them, was the explanation of their change and growth. And the New Testament is the product of that change. Christ's life was the truth which the Spirit used, and a product of His teaching was these Epistles which we have, and which for us step into the place which the historical facts held for them, and become the instrument with which the Spirit of God will deepen our understanding of Christ and enlarge our knowledge of what He is to us.

So, dear friends, whilst here we have a promise which specially applies, no doubt, to these twelve Apostles, and the result of which in them was different from its result in us, inasmuch as the Spirit's teaching, recorded in the New Testament, becomes for us the authoritative rule of faith and practice, the promise still applies to each of us in a secondary and modified sense. For there is nothing in these great valedictory words of our Lord's which has not a universal bearing,

and is not the revelation of a permanent truth in regard to the Christian Church. And, therefore, here we have the promise of a universal gift to all Christian men and women, of an actual divine Spirit to dwell with each of us, to speak in our hearts.

And what will He speak there? He will teach us a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ. He will help us to understand better what He is. He will show us more and more of the whole sweep of His work, of the whole infinite truth for morals and religion, for politics and society, for time and for eternity, about men and about God, which is wrapped up in that great saying which we first of all, perhaps under the pressure of our own sense of sin, grasp as our deliverance from sin: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That is the sum of truth which the Spirit of God interprets to every faithful heart. And as the days roll on, and new problems rise, and new difficulties present themselves, and new circumstances emerge in our personal life, we find the truth, which we at first dimly grasped as life and salvation, opening out into wisdom and depth and meaning that we never dreamed of in the early hours. A Spirit that bears witness of Christ and will make us understand Him better every day we live, if we choose, is the promise that is given here, for all Christian men and women.

Then note that this inward witness of Christ's depth and preciousness is our true weapon and stay against a hostile world. A little candle in a room will make the lightning outside almost invisible; and if I have burning in my heart the inward experience and conviction of what Jesus Christ is and what He has done

and will do for me—Oh! then, all the storm without may rage, and it will not trouble me.

If you take an empty vessel and bring pressure to bear upon it, in go the sides. Fill it, and they will resist the pressure. So with growing knowledge of Christ, and growing personal experience of His sweetness in our souls, we shall be able, untouched and undinted, to throw off the pressure which would otherwise have crushed us.

Therefore, dear friends, here is the true secret of tranquillity, in an age of questioning and doubt. Let me have that divine Voice speaking in my heart, as I may have, and no matter what questions may be doubtful, this is sure—‘We know in whom we have believed’; and we can say, ‘Settle all your controversies any way you like: one thing I know, and that divine Voice is ever saying it to me in my deepest consciousness—the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true.’ Labour for more of this inward, personal conviction of the preciousness of Jesus Christ to strengthen you against a hostile world.

And remember that there are conditions under which this Voice speaks in our souls. One is that we attend to the instrument which the Spirit of God uses, and that is ‘the truth.’ If Christians will not read their Bibles, they need not expect to have the words of these Bibles interpreted and made real to them by any inward experience. If you want to have a faith which is vindicated and warranted by your daily experience, there is only one way to get it, and that is to use the truth which the Spirit uses, and to bring yourself into contact, continual and reverent and intelligent, with the great body of divine truth that is

conveyed in these authoritative words of the Spirit of God speaking through the first witnesses.

And there must be moral discipline too. Laziness, worldliness, the absorption of attention with other things, self-conceit, prejudice, and, I was going to say, almost above all, the taking of our religion and religious opinions at secondhand from men and teachers and books—all these stand in the way of our hearing the Spirit of God when He speaks. Come away from the babble and go by yourself, and take your Bibles with you, and read them, and meditate upon them, and get near the Master of whom they speak, and the Spirit which uses the truth will use it to fortify you.

III. And, lastly, note the consequent witness with which the Christian may win the world.

‘And ye also shall bear witness of Me, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.’ That ‘also’ has, of course, direct reference to the Apostles’ witness to the facts of our Lord’s historical appearance, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension; and therefore their qualification was simply the companionship with Him which enabled them to say, ‘We saw what we tell you; we were witnesses from the beginning.’

But then, again, I say that there is no word here that belongs only to the Apostles; it belongs to us all, and so here is the task of the Christian Church in all its members. They receive the witness of the Spirit, and they are Christ’s witnesses in the world.

Note what we have to do—to bear witness; not to argue, not to adorn, but simply to attest. Note what we have to attest—the fact, not of the historical life of Jesus Christ, because we are not in a position to be witnesses of that, but the fact of His preciousness and power, and the fact of our own experience of what He

has done for us. Note, that that is by far the most powerful agency for winning the world. You can never make men angry by saying to them, 'We have found the Messiah.' You cannot irritate people, or provoke them into a controversial opposition when you say, 'Brother, let me tell you my experience. I was dark, sad, sinful, weak, solitary, miserable; and I got light, gladness, pardon, strength, companionship, and a joyful hope. I was blind—you remember me when my eyes were dark, and I sat begging outside the Temple; I was blind, now I see—look at my eyeballs.' We can all say that. This is the witness that needs no eloquence, no genius, no anything except honesty and experience; and whosoever has tasted and felt and handled of the Word of Life may surely go to a brother and say, 'Brother, I have eaten and am satisfied. Will you not help yourselves?' We can all do it, and we ought to do it. The Christian privilege of being witnessed to by the Spirit of God in our hearts brings with it the Christian duty of being witnesses in our turn to the world. That is our only weapon against the hostility which godless humanity bears to ourselves and to our Master. We may win men by that; we can win them by nothing else. 'Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and My servants whom I have chosen.' Christian friend, listen to the Master, who says, 'Him that confesseth Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father in heaven.'

WHY CHRIST SPEAKS

'These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.'—JOHN xvi. 1-8.

THE unbroken flow of thought, and the many subtle links of connection between the parts, of these inexhaustible last words of our Lord make any attempt at grouping them into sections more or less unsatisfactory and artificial. But I have ventured to throw these, perhaps too many, verses together for our consideration now, because a phrase of frequent recurrence in them manifestly affords a key to their main subject. Notice how our Lord four times repeats the expression, 'These things have I spoken unto you.' He is not so much adding anything new to His words, as rather contemplating the reasons for His speech now, the reasons for His silence before, and the imperfect apprehension of the things spoken which His disciples had, and which led to their making His announcement, thus imperfectly understood, an occasion for sorrow rather than for joy. There is a kind of landing-place or pause here in the ascending staircase. Our Lord meditates for Himself, and invites us to meditate with Him, rather upon His past utterances than upon anything additional to them. So, then, whilst it is true that we have in two of these verses a repetition, in a somewhat more intense and detailed form, of the previous warnings of the hostility of the world, in the main the subject of

the present section is that which I have indicated. And I take the fourfold recurrence of that clause to which I have pointed as marking out for us the leading ideas that we are to gather from these words.

I. There is, first, our Lord's loving reason for His speech.

This is given in a double form. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.' And, again, 'These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.' These two statements substantially coalesce and point to the same idea.

They are separated, as I have said, by a reiteration, in more emphatic form, of the dark prospect which He has been holding out to His disciples. He tells them that the world which hates them is to be fully identified with the apostate Jewish Church. 'The synagogue' is for them 'the world.' There is a solemn lesson in that. The organised body that calls itself God's Church and House may become the most rampant enemy of Christ's people, and be the truest embodiment on the face of the earth of all that He means by 'the world.' A formal church is the true world always; and to-day as then. And such a body will do the cruellest things and believe that it is offering up Christ's witnesses as sacrifices to God. That is partly an aggravation and partly an alleviation of the sin. It is possible that the inquisitor and the man in the *San Benito*, whom he ties to the stake, may shake hands yet at His side up yonder. But a church which has become the world will do its persecution and think that it is worship, and call the burning of God's people an *auto-da-fe* (act of faith); and the bottom of it all is that, in the blaze of light, and calling themselves God's, 'they do not

know' either God or Christ. They do not know the one because they will not know the other.

But that is all parenthetical in the present section, and so I say nothing more about it; and ask you, rather, just to look at the loving reasons which Christ here suggests for His present speech—'that ye should not be offended,' or stumble. He warns them of the storm before it bursts, lest, when it bursts, it should sweep them away from their moorings. Of course, there could be nothing more productive of intellectual bewilderment, and more likely to lead to doubt as to one's own convictions, than to find oneself at odds with the synagogue about the question of the Messiah. A modest man might naturally say, 'Perhaps I am wrong and they are right.' A coward would be sure to say, 'I will sink my convictions and fall in with the majority.' The stumbling-block for these first Jewish converts, in the attitude of the whole mass of the nation towards Christ and His pretensions, is one of such a magnitude as we cannot, by any exercise of our imagination, realise. 'And,' says Christ, 'the only way by which you will ever get over the temptation to intellectual doubt or to cowardly apostasy that arises from your being thrown out of sympathy with the whole mass of your people, and the traditions of the generations, is to reflect that I told you it would be so, before it came to pass.'

Of course all that has a special bearing upon those to whom it was originally addressed, and then it has a secondary bearing upon Christians, whose lot it is to live in a time of actual persecution. But that does not in the slightest degree destroy the fact that it also has a bearing upon every one of us. For if you and I are Christian people, and trying to live like our Master,

and to do as He would have us to do, we too shall often have to stand in such a very small minority, and be surrounded by people who take such an entirely opposite view of duty and of truth, as that we shall be only too much disposed to give up and falter in the clearness, fullness, and braveness of our utterance, and think, 'Well, perhaps after all it is better for me to hold my tongue.'

And then, besides this, there are all the cares and griefs which befall each of us, with regard to which also, as well as with regard to the difficulties and dangers and oppositions which we may meet with in a faithful Christian life, the principles of my text have a distinct and direct application. He has told us in order that we might not stumble, because when the hour comes and the sorrow comes with it, we remember that He told us all about it before.

It is one of the characteristics of Christianity that Jesus Christ does not try to enlist recruits by highly-coloured, rosy pictures of the blessing and joy of serving Him, keeping His hand all the while upon the weary marches and the wounds and pains. He tells us plainly at the beginning, 'If you take My yoke upon you, you will have to carry a heavy burden. You will have to abstain from a great many things that you would like to do. You will have to do a great many things that your flesh will not like. The road is rough, and a high wall on each side. There are lovely flowers and green pastures on the other side of the hedge, where it is a great deal easier walking upon the short grass than it is upon the stony path. The roadway is narrow, and the gateway is very strait, but the track goes steadily up. Will you accept the terms and come in and walk upon it?'

It is far better and nobler, and more attractive also, to tell us frankly and fully the difficulties and dangers than to try and coax us by dwelling on pleasures and ease. Jesus Christ will have no service on false pretences, but will let us understand at the beginning that if we serve under His flag we have to make up our minds to hardships which otherwise we may escape, to antagonisms which otherwise will not be provoked, and to more than an ordinary share of sorrow and suffering and pain. 'Through much tribulation we must enter the Kingdom.'

And the way by which all these troubles and cares, whether they be those incident and peculiar to Christian life, or those common to humanity, can best be met and overcome, is precisely by this thought, 'The Master has told us before.' Sorrows anticipated are more easily met. It is when the vessel is caught with all its sails set that it is almost sure to go down, and, at all events, sure to be badly damaged in the typhoon. But when the barometer has been watched, and its fall has given warning, and everything movable has been made fast, and every spare yard has been sent below, and all tightened up and ship-shape—then she can ride out the storm. Forewarned is forearmed. Savages think, when an eclipse comes, that a wolf has swallowed the sun, and it will never come out again. We know that it has all been calculated beforehand, and since we know that it is coming to-morrow, when it does come, it is only a passing darkness. Sorrow anticipated is sorrow half overcome; and when it falls on us, the bewilderment, as if 'some strange thing had happened,' will be escaped when we can remember that the Master has told us it all beforehand.

And again, sorrow foretold gives us confidence in

our Guide. We have the chart, and as we look upon it we see marked 'waterless country,' 'pathless rocks,' 'desert and sand,' 'wells and palm-trees.' Well, when we come to the first of these, and find ourselves, as the map says, in the waterless country; and when, as we go on step by step, and mile after mile, we find it is all down there, we say to ourselves, 'The remainder will be accurate, too,' and if we are in 'Marah' to-day, where 'the water is bitter,' and nothing but the wood of the tree that grows there can ever sweeten it, we shall be at 'Elim' to-morrow, where there are 'the twelve wells and the seventy palm trees.' The chart is right, and the chart says that the end of it all is 'the land that flows with milk and honey.' He *has* told us *this*; if there had been anything worse than this, He would have told us *that*. 'If it were not so I would have told you.' The sorrow foretold deepens our confidence in our Guide.

Sorrow that comes punctually in accordance with His word plainly comes in obedience to His will. Our Lord uses a little word in this context which is very significant. He says, 'When *their hour* is come.'

'Their hour'—the time allotted to them. Allotted by whom? Allotted by Him. He could tell that they would come, because it was as His instruments that they came. 'Their time' was His appointment. It was only an 'hour,' a definite, appointed, and brief period in accordance with His loving purpose. It takes all sorts of weathers to make a year; and after all the sorts of weathers are run out, the year's results are realised and the calm comes. And so the good old hymn, with its rhythm that speaks at once of fear and triumph, has caught the true meaning of these words of our Lord's—

'Why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?
He told me no less.'

'These things have I spoken unto you that ye might not be offended.'

II. Still further, note our Lord's loving reasons for past silence. 'These things I said not unto you from the beginning, because I was with you.'

Of course there had been in His early ministry hints, and very plain references, to persecutions and trials, but we must not restrict the 'these things' of my text to that only, but rather include the whole of the previous chapter, in which He sets the sorrow and the hostility which His servants have to endure in their true light, as being the consequences of their union with Him and of the closeness and the identity of life and fate between the Vine and the branches. In so systematic and detailed fashion, and with such an exhibition of the grounds of its necessity, our Lord had not spoken of the world's hostility in His earlier ministry, but had reserved it to these last moments, and the reason why He had given but passing hints before was because He was there. What a superb confidence that expresses in His ability to shield His poor followers from all that might hurt and harm them! He spreads the ample robe of His protection over them, or rather, to go back to His own metaphor, 'as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings' so He gathers them to His own breast, and stretches over them that which is at once protection and warmth, and keeps them safe. As long as He is there, no harm can come to them. But He is going away, and so it is time to speak, and to speak more plainly.

That, too, yields for us, dear brethren, truths that apply to us quite as much as to that little group of silent listeners. For us, too, difficulties and sorrows, though foretold in general terms, are largely hidden till they are near. It would have been of little use for Christ to have spoken more plainly in those early days of His ministry. The disciples managed to forget and to misunderstand His plain utterances, for instance, about His own death and resurrection. There needs to be an adaptation between the hearing ear and the spoken word, in order that the word spoken should be of use, and there are great tracts of Scripture dealing with the sorrows of life, which lie perfectly dark and dead to us, until experience vitalises them. The old Greeks used to send messages from one army to another by means of a roll of parchment twisted spirally round a bâton, and then written on. It was perfectly unintelligible when it fell into a man's hands that had not a corresponding bâton to twist it upon. Many of Christ's messages to us are like that. You can only understand the utterances when life gives you the frame round which to wrap them, and then they flash up into meaning, and we say at once, 'He told us it all before, and I scarcely knew that He had told me, until this moment when I need it.'

Oh, it is merciful that there should be a gradual unveiling of what is to come to us, that the road should wind, and that we should see so short a way before us. Did you never say to yourselves, 'If I had known all this before, I do not think I could have lived to face it'? And did you not feel how good and kind and loving it was, that in the revelation there had been concealment, and that while Jesus Christ had told us in general terms that we must expect sorrows and

trials, this specific form of sorrow and trial had not been foreseen by us until we came close to it? Thank God for the loving reticence, and for the as loving eloquence of His speech and of His silence, with regard to sorrow.

And take this further lesson, that there ought to be in all our lives times of close and blessed communion with that Master, when the sense of His presence with us makes all thought of sorrows and trials in the future out of place and needlessly disturbing. If these disciples had drunk in the spirit of Jesus Christ when they were with Him, then they would not have been so bewildered when He left them. When He was near them there was something better for them to do than to be 'over exquisite to cast the fashion of uncertain evils' in the future—namely, to grow into His life, to drink in the sweetness of His presence, to be moulded into the likeness of His character, to understand Him better, and to realise His nearness more fully. And, dear brethren, for us all there are times—and it is our own fault if these are not very frequent and blessed—when thus, in such an hour of sweet communion with the present Christ, the future will be all radiant and calm, if we look into it, or, better, the present will be so blessed that there will be no need to think of the future. These men in the upper chamber, if they had learnt all the lessons that He was teaching them then, would not have gone out, to sleep in Gethsemane, and to tell lies in the high priest's hall, and to fly like frightened sheep from the Cross, and to despair at the tomb. And you and I, if we sit at His table, and keep our hearts near Him, eating and drinking of that heavenly manna, shall 'go in the strength of that meat forty days into the wilderness,' and say—

'E'en let the unknown to-morrow
Bring with it what it may.'

III. Lastly, I must touch, for the sake of completeness, upon the final thought in these pregnant verses, and that is, the imperfect apprehension of our Lord's words, which leads to sorrow instead of joy.

'Now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.' He had been telling them—and it was the one definite idea that they gathered from His words—that He was going. And what did they say? They said, 'Going! What is to become of *us*?' If there had been a little less selfishness and a little more love, and if they had put their question, 'Going! What is to become of *Him*?' then it would not have been sorrow that would have filled their hearts, but a joy that would have flooded out all the sorrow, 'and the winter of their discontent' would have been changed into 'glorious summer,' because He was going to Him that sent Him; that is to say, He was going with His work done and His message accomplished. And therefore, if they could only have overlooked their own selves, and the bearing of His departure, as it seemed to them, on themselves, and have thought of it a little as it affected Him, they would have found that all the oppressive and the dark in it would have disappeared, and they would have been glad.

Ah, dear brethren, that gives us a thought on which I can but touch now, that the steadfast contemplation of the ascended Christ, who has gone to the Father, having finished His work, is the sovereign antidote against all sense of separation and solitude, the sovereign power by which we may face a hostile world,

the sovereign cure for every sorrow. If we could live in the light of the great triumphant, ascended Lord, then, Oh, how small would the babble of the world be. If the great White Throne, and He that sits upon it, were more distinctly before us, then we could face anything, and sorrow would 'become a solemn scorn of ills,' and all the transitory would be reduced to its proper insignificance, and we should be emancipated from fear and every temptation to unfaithfulness and apostasy. Look up to the Master who has gone, and as the dying martyr outside the city wall 'saw the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing'—having sprung to His feet to help His poor servant—'at the right hand of God,' so with that vision in our eyes and the light of that Face flashing upon our faces, and making them like the angels', we shall be masters of grief and care, and pain and trial, and enmity and disappointment, and sorrow and sin, and feel that the absent Christ is the present Christ, and that the present Christ is the conquering power in us.

Dear brethren, there is nothing else that will make us victors over the world and ourselves. If we can grasp Him by our faith and keep ourselves near Him, then union with Him as of the Vine and the branches, which will result inevitably in suffering here, will result as inevitably in joy hereafter. For He will never relax the adamantine grasp of His strong hand until He raises us to Himself, and 'if so be that we suffer with Him we shall also be glorified together.'

THE DEPARTING CHRIST AND THE COMING SPIRIT

'Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will *convince* the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.'—JOHN xvi. 7, 8.

WE read these words in the light of all that has gone after, and to us they are familiar and almost thread-bare. But if we would appreciate their sublimity, we must think away nineteen centuries, and all Christendom, and recall these eleven poor men and their peasant Leader in the upper room. They were not very wise, nor very strong, and outside these four walls there was scarcely a creature in the whole world that had the least belief either in Him or in them. They had everything against them, and most of all their own hearts. They had nothing for them but their Master's promise. Their eyes had been dimmed by their sorrowful hearts, so that they could not see the truth which He had been trying to reveal to them ; and His departure had presented itself to them only as it affected themselves, and therefore had brought a sense of loss and desolation.

And now He bids them think of that departure, as it affects themselves, as pure gain. 'It is for your profit that I go away.' He explains that staggering statement by the thought which He has already presented to them, in varying aspects, of His departure as the occasion for the coming of that Great Comforter, who, when He is come, will through them work upon the world, which knows neither them nor Him. They are to go forth 'as sheep in the midst of wolves,' but

in this promise He tells them that they will become the judges and accusers of the world, which, by the Spirit dwelling in them, they will be able to overcome, and convict of error and of fault.

We must remember that the whole purpose of the words which we are considering now is the strengthening of the disciples in their conflict with the world, and that, therefore, the operations of that divine Spirit which are here spoken of are operations carried on by their instrumentality and through the word which they spake. With that explanation we can consider the great words before us.

I. The first thing that strikes me about them is that wonderful thought of the gain to Christ's servants from Christ's departure. 'It is expedient for you that I go away.'

I need not enlarge here upon what we have had frequent occasion to remark, the manner in which our Lord here represents the complex whole of His death and ascension as being His own voluntary act. He 'goes.' He is neither taken away by death nor rapt up to heaven in a whirlwind, but of His own exuberant power and by His own will He goes into the region of the grave and thence to the throne. Contrast the story of His ascension with that Old Testament story of the ascension of Elijah. One needed the chariot of fire and the horses of fire to bear him up into the sphere, all foreign to his mortal and earthly manhood; the Other needed no outward power to lift Him, nor any vehicle to carry Him from this dim spot which men call earth, but slowly, serenely, upborne by His own indwelling energy, and rising as to His native home, He ascended up on high, and went where the very manner of His going proclaimed

that He had been before. 'If I go away, I will send Him.'

But that is a digression. What we are concerned with now is the thought of Christ's departure as being a step in advance, and a positive gain, even to those poor, bewildered men who were clustering round Him, depending absolutely upon Himself, and feeling themselves orphaned and helpless without Him.

Now if we would feel the full force and singularity of this saying of our Lord's, let us put side by side with it that other one, 'I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.' Why is it that the Apostle says, 'Though I want to go I am bound to stay?' and why is it that the Master says, 'It is for your good that I am going,' but because of the essential difference in the relation of the two to the people who are to be left, and in the continuance of the work of the two after they had departed? Paul knew that when he went, whatever befell those whom he loved and would fain help, he could not stretch a hand to do anything for them. He knew that death dropped the portcullis between him and them, and, whatever their sore need on the one side of the iron gate, he on the other could not succour or save. Jesus Christ said, 'It is better for you that I should go,' because He knew that all His influences would flow through the grated door unchecked, and that, departed, He would still be the life of them that trusted in Him; and, having left them, would come near them, by the very act of leaving them.

And so there is here indicated for us—as we shall have occasion to see more fully, presently,—in that one singular and anomalous fact of Christ's departure being

a positive gain to those that trust in Him, the singularity and uniqueness of His work for them and His relation to them.

The words mean a great deal more than the analogies of our relation to dear ones or great ones, loves or teachers, who have departed, might suggest. Of course we all know that it is quite true that death reveals to the heart the sweetness and the preciousness of the departed ones, and that its refining touch manifests to our blind eyes what we did not see so clearly when they were beside us. We all know that it needs distance to measure men, and the dropping away of the commonplace and the familiar ere we can see 'the likeness' of our contemporaries 'to the great of old.' We have to travel across the plains before we can measure the relative height of the clustered mountains, and discern which is manifestly the loftiest. And all *this* is true in reference to Jesus Christ and His relation to us. But that does not go half-way towards the understanding of such words as these of my text, which tell us that so singular and solitary is His relation to us that the thing which ends the work of all other men, and begins the decay of their influence, begins for Him a higher form of work and a wider sweep of sway. He is nearer us when He leaves us, and works with us and in us more mightily from the throne than He did upon the earth. Who is He of whom this is true? And what kind of work is it of which it is true that death continues and perfects it?

So let me note, before I pass on, that there is a great truth here for us. We are accustomed to look back to our Lord's earthly ministry, and to fancy that those who gathered round Him, and heard Him speak, and

saw His deeds, were in a better position for loving Him and trusting Him than you and I are. It is all a mistake. We have lost nothing that they had which was worth the keeping; and we have gained a great deal which they had not. We have not to compare our relation to Christ with theirs, as we might do our relation to some great thinker or poet, with that of his contemporaries, but we have Christ in a better form, if I may so speak; and we, on whom the ends of the world are come, may have a deeper and a fuller and a closer intimacy with Him than was possible for men whose perceptions were disturbed by sense, and who had to pierce through 'the veil, that is to say, His flesh,' before they reached the Holy of Holies of His spirit.

II. Note, secondly, the coming for which Christ's going was needful, and which makes that going a gain.

'If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you.' Now we have already, in former sermons, touched upon many of the themes which would naturally be suggested by these words, and therefore I do not propose to dwell upon them at any length. There is only one point to which I desire to refer briefly here, and that is the necessity which here seems to be laid down by our Lord for His departure, in order that that divine Spirit may come and dwell with men. That necessity goes down deeper into the mysteries of the divinity and of the processes and order of divine revelation than it is given to us to follow. But though we can only speak superficially and fragmentarily about such a matter, let me just remind you, in the briefest possible words, of what Scripture plainly declares to us with regard to this high and, in its full

ness, ineffable matter. It tells us that the complete work of Jesus Christ—not merely His coming upon earth, or His life amongst men, but also His sacrificial death upon the Cross—was the necessary preliminary, and in some sense procuring cause, of the gift of that divine Spirit. It tells us—and there we are upon ground on which we can more fully verify the statement—that His work must be completed ere that Spirit can be sent, because the word is the Spirit's weapon for the world, and the revelation of God in Jesus must be ended, ere the application of that revelation, which is the Spirit's work, can be begun in its full energy.

It tells us, further, (and there our eyesight fails, and we have to accept what we are told), that Jesus Christ must ascend on high and be at the right hand of God, ere He can pour down upon men the fullness of the Spirit which dwelt uncommunicated in Him in the time of His earthly humiliation. 'Thou hast ascended up on high,' and therefore 'Thou hast given gifts to men.' We accept the declaration, not knowing all the deep necessity in the divine Nature on which it rests, but believing it, because He in whom we have confidence has declared it to us.

And we are further told—and there our experience may, in some degree, verify the statement,—that only those, in whose hearts there is union to Jesus Christ by faith in His completed work and ascended glory, are capable of receiving that divine gift. So every way, both as regards the depths of Deity and the processes of revelation, and as regards the power of the humanity of Christ to impart His Spirit, and as regards the capacity of us poor recipients to receive it, the words of my text seem to be confirmed, and we can, though not with full insight, at any rate with full

faith, accept the statement, 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you.'

That coming is gain. It teaches a deeper knowledge of Him. It teaches and gives a fuller possession of the life of righteousness which is like His own. It draws us into the fellowship of the Son.

III. Lastly, note here the threefold conflict of the Spirit through the Church with the world.

'When He is come He will convict the world' in respect 'of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.' By the 'reproof,' or rather 'conviction,' which is spoken about here, is meant the process by which certain facts are borne in upon men's understanding and consciences, and, along with these facts, the conviction of error and fault in reference to them. It is no mere process of demonstration of an intellectual truth, but it is a process of conviction of error in respect to great moral and religious truth, and of manifestation of the truths in regard to which the error and the sin have been committed. So we have here the triple division of the great work which the divine Spirit does, through Christian men and women, in the world.

'He shall convict the world of sin.' The outstanding first characteristic of the whole Gospel message is the new gravity which it attaches to the fact of sin, the deeper meaning which it gives to the word, and the larger scope which it shows its blighting influences to have had in humanity. Apart from the conviction of sin by the Spirit using the word proclaimed by disciples, the world has scarcely a notion of what sin is, its inwardness, its universality, the awfulness of it as a fact affecting man's whole being and all his relations to God. All these conceptions are especially the product of Christian truth. Without

it, what does the world know about the poison of sin? And what does it care about the poison until the conviction has been driven home to the reluctant consciousness of mankind by the Spirit wielding the word? This conviction comes first in the divine order. I do not say that the process of turning a man of the world into a member of Christ's Church always begins, as a matter of fact, with the conviction of sin. I believe it most generally does so; but without insisting upon a pedantic adherence to a sequence, and without saying a word about the depth and intensity of such a conviction, I am here to assert that a Christianity which is not based upon the conviction of sin is an impotent Christianity, and will be of very little use to the men who profess it, and will have no power to propagate itself in the world. Everything in our conception of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of His work for us depends upon what we think about this primary fact of man's condition, that he is a sinful man. The root of all heresy lies there. Every error that has led away men from Jesus Christ and His Cross may be traced up to defective notions of sin and a defective realisation of it. If I do not feel as the Bible would have me feel, that I am a sinful man, I shall think differently of Jesus Christ and of my need of Him, and of what He is to me. Christianity may be to me a system of beautiful ethics, a guide for life, a revelation of much precious truth, but it will not be the redemptive power without which I am lost. And Jesus Christ will be shorn of His brightest beams, unless I see Him as the Redeemer of my soul from sin, which else would destroy and is destroying it. Is Christianity merely a better morality? Is it merely a higher revelation of the divine Nature? Or does

it *do* something as well as *say* something, and what does it do? Is Jesus Christ only a Teacher, a Wise Man, an Example, a Prophet, or is He the Sacrifice for the sins of the world? Oh, brethren, we must begin where this text begins; and our whole conception of Him and of His work for us must be based upon this fact, that we are sinful and lost, and that Jesus Christ, by His sweet and infinite love and all-powerful sacrifice, is our soul's Redeemer and our only Hope. The world has to be convicted and convinced of sin as the first step to its becoming a Church.

The next step of this divine Spirit's conviction is that which corresponds to the consciousness of sin, the dawning upon the darkened soul of the blessed sunrise of righteousness. The triple subjects of conviction must necessarily belong to the world of which our Lord is speaking. It must be the world that is convinced, and it must be the world's sin and the world's righteousness and the world's judgment of which my text speaks. How, then, can there follow on the conviction of sin as mine a conviction of righteousness as mine? I know but one way, 'Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of God through faith.' When a man is convinced of sin, there will dawn upon the heart the wondrous thought that a righteousness may be his, given to him from above, which will sweep away all his sin and make him righteous as Christ is righteous. That conviction will never awake in its blessed and hope-giving power unless it be preceded by the other. It is of no use to exhibit medicine to a man who does not know himself diseased. It is of no use to talk about righteousness to a man who has not found himself to be a sinner. And it is of as little

use to talk to a man of sin unless you are ready to tell him of a righteousness that will cover all his sin. The one conviction without the other is misery, the second without the first is irrelevant and far away.

The world as a world has but dim and inadequate conceptions of what righteousness is. A Pharisee is its type, or a man that keeps a clean life in regard to great transgressions; a whited sepulchre of some sort or other. The world apart from Christ has but languid desires after even the poor righteousness that it understands, and the world apart from Christ is afflicted by a despairing scepticism as to the possibility of ever being righteous at all. And there are men listening to me now in every one of these three conditions—not caring to be righteous, not understanding what it is to be righteous, and cynically disbelieving that it is possible to be so. My brother, here comes the message to you—first, Thou art sinful; second, God's righteousness lies at thy side to take and wear if thou wilt.

The last of these triple convictions is 'judgment.' If there be in the world these two things both operating, sin and righteousness, and if the two come together, what then? If there is to be a collision, as there must be, which will go down? Christ tells us that this divine Spirit will teach us that righteousness will triumph over sin, and that there will be a judgment which will destroy that which is the weaker, though it seems the stronger. Now I take it that the judgment which is spoken about here is not merely a future retribution beyond the grave, but that, whilst that is included, and is the principal part of the idea, we are always to regard the judgment of the hereafter as being prepared for by the continual judgment here

And so there are two thoughts, a blessed one and a terrible one, wrapped up in that word—a blessed thought for us sinful men, inasmuch as we may be sure that the divine righteousness, which is given to us, will judge us and separate us day by day from our sins; and a terrible thought, inasmuch as if I, a sinful man, do not make friends with and ally myself to the divine righteousness which is proffered to me, I shall one day have to front it on the other side of the flood, when the contact must necessarily be to me destruction.

Time does not allow me to dwell upon these solemn matters as I fain would, but let me gather all I have been feebly trying to say to you now into one sentence. This threefold conviction, in conscience, understanding, and heart, of sin which is mine, of righteousness which may be mine, and of judgment which must be mine—this threefold conviction is that which makes the world into a Church. It is the message of Christianity to each of us. How do you stand to it? Do you hearken to the Spirit who is striving to convince you of these? Or do you gather yourselves together into an obstinate, close-knit unbelief, or a loose-knit indifference which is as impenetrable? Beware that you resist not the Spirit of God!

THE CONVICTING FACTS

'Of sin, because they believe not on Me; Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.'—JOHN xvi. 9-11.

OUR Lord has just been telling His disciples how He will equip them, as His champions, for their conflict with the world. A divine Spirit is coming to them who will work in them and through them; and by

their simple and unlettered testimony will 'convict,' or convince, the mass of ungodly men of error and crime in regard to these three things—sin, righteousness, and judgment.

He now advances to tell them that this threefold conviction which they, as counsel for the prosecution, will establish as against the world at the bar, will be based upon three facts: first, a truth of experience; second, a truth of history; third, a truth of revelation, all three facts having reference to Jesus Christ and His relation to men.

Now these three facts are—the world's unbelief; Christ's ascension and session at the right hand of God; and the 'judgment of the prince of this world.' If we remember that what our Lord is here speaking about is the work of a divine Spirit through the ministration of believing men, then Pentecost with its thousands 'pricked to the heart,' and the Roman ruler who trembled, as the prisoner 'reasoned of righteousness and judgment to come,' are illustrations of the way in which the humble disciples towered above the pride and strength of the world, and from criminals at its bar became its accusers.

These three facts are the staple and the strength of the Christian ministry. These three facts are misapprehended, and have failed to produce their right impression, unless they have driven home to our consciences and understandings the triple conviction of my text. And so I come to you with the simple questions which are all-important for each of us: Have you looked these three facts in the face—unbelief, the ascended Christ, a judged prince of the world, and have you learned their meaning as it bears on your own character and religious life?

I. The first point here is the rejection of Jesus Christ as the climax of the world's sin.

Strange words! They are in some respects the most striking instance of that gigantic self-assertion of our Lord, of which we have had occasion to see so many examples in these valedictory discourses. The world is full of all unrighteousness and wickedness, lust and immorality, intemperance, cruelty, hatred, all manner of buzzing evils that stink and sting around us. But Jesus Christ passes them all by and points to a mere negative thing, to an inward thing, to the attitude of men towards Himself; and He says, 'If you want to know what sin is, look at that!' *There* is the worst of all sins. There is a typical instance of what sin is, in which, as in some anatomical preparation, you may see all its fibres straightened out and made visible. Look at that if you want to know what the world is, and what the world's sin is.

Some of us do not think that it is sin at all; and tell us that man is no more responsible for his belief than he is for the colour of his hair, and suchlike talk. Well, let me put a very plain question: What is it that a man turns away from when he turns away from Jesus Christ? The plainest, the loveliest, the loftiest, the perfectest revelation of God in His beauty and completeness that ever dawned, or ever will dawn upon creation. He rejects that. Anything more? Yes! He turns away from the loveliest human life that ever was, or will be, lived. Anything more? Yes! He turns away from a miracle of self-sacrificing love, which endured the Cross for enemies, and willingly embraced agony and shame and death for the sake of those who inflicted them upon Him. Anything more? Yes! He turns away from hands laden with,

and offering him, the most precious and needful blessings that a poor soul on earth can desire or expect.

And if this be true, if unbelief in Jesus Christ be indeed all this that I have sketched out, another question arises, What does such an attitude and act indicate as to the rejector? He stands in the presence of the loveliest revelation of the divine nature and heart, and he sees no light in it. Why, but because he has blinded his eyes and cannot behold? He is incapable of seeing 'God manifest in the flesh,' because he 'loves the darkness rather than the light.' He turns away from the revelation of the loveliest and most self-sacrificing love. Why, but because he bears in himself a heart cased with brass and triple steel of selfishness, against the manifestation of love? He turns away from the offered hands heaped with the blessings that he needs. Why, but because he does not care for the gifts that are offered? Forgiveness, cleansing, purity a heaven which consists in the perfecting of all these, have no attractions for him. The fugitive Israelites in the wilderness said, 'We do not want your light, tasteless manna. It may do very well for angels, but we have been accustomed to garlic and onions down in Egypt. They smell strong, and there is some taste in *them*. Give us *them*.' And so some of you say, 'The offer of pardon is of no use to me, for I am not troubled with my sin. The offer of purity has no attraction to me, for I rather like the dirt and wallowing in it. The offer of a heaven of your sort is but a dreary prospect to me. And so I turn away from the hands that offer precious things.' The man who is blind to the God that beams, lambent and loving, upon him in the face of Jesus Christ—the man who has no stirrings of

responsive gratitude for the great outpouring of love upon the Cross—the man who does not care for anything that Jesus Christ can give him, surely, in turning away, commits a real sin.

I do not deny, of course, that there may be intellectual difficulties cropping up in connection with the acceptance of the message of salvation in Jesus Christ, but as, on the one hand, I am free to admit that many a man may be putting a true trust in Christ which is joined with a very hesitant grasp of some of the things which, to me, are the very essence and heart of the Gospel; so, on the other side, I would have you remember that there is necessarily a moral quality in our attitude to all moral and religious truth; and that sin does not cease to be sin because its doer is a thinker or has systematised his rejection into a creed. Though it is not for us to measure motives and to peer into hearts, at the bottom there lies what Christ Himself put His finger on: '*Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.*'

Then, still further, let me remind you that our Lord here presents this fact of man's unbelief as being an instance in which we may see what the real nature of sin is. To use learned language, it is a 'typical' sin. In all other acts of sin you get the poison manipulated into various forms, associated with other elements, disguised more or less. But here, because it is purely an inward act having relation to Jesus Christ, and to God manifested in Him, and not done at the bidding of the animal nature, or of any of the other strong temptations and impulses which hurry men into gross and coarse forms of manifest transgression, you get sin in its essence. Belief in Christ is the surrender of myself. Sin is living to myself rather than to God. And there

you touch the bottom. All those different kinds of sin, however unlike they may be to one another—the lust of the sensualist, the craft of the cheat, the lie of the deceitful, the passion of the unregulated man, the avarice of the miser—all of them have this one common root, a diseased and bloated regard to self. The definition of sin is,—living to myself and making myself my own centre. The definition of faith is,—making Christ my centre and living for Him. Therefore, if you want to know what is the sinfulness of sin, there it is. And if I may use such a word in such a connection, it is all packed away in its *purest* form in the act of rejecting that Lord.

Brother, it is no exaggeration to say that, when you have summoned up before you the ugliest forms of man's sins that you can fancy, this one overtops them all, because it presents in the simplest form the mother-tincture of all sins, which, variously coloured and perfumed and combined, makes the evil of them all. A heap of rotting, poisonous matter is offensive to many senses, but the colourless, scentless, tasteless drop has the poison in its most virulent form, and is not a bit less virulent, though it has been learnedly distilled and christened with a scientific name, and put into a dainty jewelled flask. 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' I lay that upon the hearts and consciences of some of my present hearers as the key to their rejection or disregard of Christ and His salvation.

II. Now, secondly, notice the ascension of Jesus Christ as the pledge and the channel of the world's righteousness—'Because I go to the Father, and ye see Me no more.'

He speaks as if the process of departure were already commenced. It had three stages—death, resurrection, ascension; but these three are all parts of the one departure. And so He says: ‘Because, in the future, when ye go forth to preach in My name, I shall be there with the Father, having finished the work for which He sent Me; therefore you will convince the world of righteousness.’

Now let me put that briefly in two forms. First of all, the fact of an ascended Christ is the guarantee and proof of His own complete fulfilment of the ideal of a righteous man. Or to put it into simpler words, suppose Jesus Christ is dead; suppose that He never rose from the grave; suppose that His bones mouldered in some sepulchre; suppose that there had been no ascension—would it be possible to believe that He was other than an ordinary man? And would it be possible to believe that, however beautiful these familiar records of His life, and however lovely the character which they reveal, there was really in Him no sin at all? A dead Christ means a Christ who, like the rest of us, had His limitations and His faults. But, on the other hand, if it be true that He sprang from the grave because ‘it was not possible that He should be holden of it,’ and because in His nature there was no proclivity to death, since there had been no indulgence in sin; and if it be true that He ascended up on high because that was His native sphere, and He rose to it as naturally as the water in the valley will rise to the height of the hill from which it has descended, then we can see that God has set His seal upon that life by that resurrection and ascension; and as we gaze on Him swept up heavenward by His own calm power, a light falls backward upon all His earthly life, upon His

claims to purity, and to union with the Father, and we say, 'Surely this was a perfectly righteous Man.'

And further let me remind you that with the supernatural facts of our Lord's resurrection and ascension stands or falls the possibility of His communicating any of His righteousness to us sinful men. If there be no such possibility, what does Jesus Christ's beauty of character matter to me? Nothing! I shall have to stumble on as best I can, sometimes ashamed and rebuked, sometimes stimulated and sometimes reduced to despair, by looking at the record of His life. If He be lying dead in a forgotten grave, and hath not 'ascended up on high,' then there can come from His history and past nothing other in kind, though, perhaps, a little more in degree, than comes from the history and the past of the beautiful and white souls that have sometimes lived in the world. He is a saint like them, He is a teacher like them, He is a prophet like some of them, and we have but to try our best to copy that marble purity and white righteousness. But if He hath ascended up on high, and sits there, wielding the forces of the universe, as we believe He does, then to Him belongs the divine prerogative of imparting His nature and His character to them that love Him. Then His righteousness is not a solitary, uncommunicative perfectness for Himself, but like a sun in the heavens, which streams out vivifying and enlightening rays to all that seek His face. If it be true that Christ has risen, then it is also true that you and I, convicted of sin, and learning our weakness and our faults, may come to Him, and by the exercise of that simple and yet omnipotent act of faith, may ally our incompleteness with His perfectness, our sin with His righteousness, our emptiness with His fullness, and may have all

the grace and the beauty of Jesus Christ passing over into us to be the Spirit of life in us, 'making us free from the law of sin and death.' If Christ be risen, His righteousness may be the world's; if Christ be not risen, His righteousness is useless to any but to Himself.

My brother, wed yourself to that dear Lord by faith in Him, and His righteousness will become yours, and you will be 'found in Him without spot and blameless,' clothed with white raiment like His own, and sharing in the Throne which belongs to the righteous Christ.

III. Lastly, notice the judgment of the world's prince as the prophecy of the judgment of the world.

We are here upon ground which is only made known to us by the revelation of Scripture. We began with a fact of man's experience; we passed on to a fact of history; now we have a fact certified to us only on Christ's authority.

The world *has* a prince. That ill-omened and chaotic agglomeration of diverse forms of evil has yet a kind of anarchic order in it, and, like the fabled serpent's locks on the Gorgon head, they intertwine and sting one another, and yet they are a unity. We hear very little about 'the prince of the world' in Scripture. Mercifully the existence of such a being is not plainly revealed until the fact of Christ's victory over him is revealed. But however ludicrous mediæval and vulgar superstitions may have made the notion, and however incredible the tremendous figure painted by the great Puritan poet has proved to be, there is nothing ridiculous, and nothing that we have the right to say is incredible, in the plain declarations that came from Christ's lips over and over again, that the world, the aggregate of ungodly men, *has* a prince.

And then my text tells us that that prince is 'judged.' The Cross did that, as Jesus Christ over and over again indicates, sometimes in plain words, as 'Now is the judgment of this world,' 'Now is the prince of this world cast out'; sometimes in metaphor, as 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,' 'First bind the strong man and then spoil his house.' We do not know how far-reaching the influences of the Cross may be, and what they may have done in those dark regions, but we know that since that Cross, the power of evil in the world has been broken in its centre, that God has been disclosed, that new forces have been lodged in the heart of humanity, which only need to be developed in order to overcome the evil. We know that since that auspicious day when 'He spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly and leading them in triumph,' even when He was nailed upon the Cross, the history of the world has been the judgment of the world. Hoary iniquities have toppled into the ceaseless washing sea of divine love which has struck against their bases. Ancient evils have vanished, and more are on the point of vanishing. A loftier morality, a higher notion of righteousness, a deeper conception of sin, new hopes for the world and for men, have dawned upon mankind; and the prince of the world is led bound, as it were, at the victorious chariot wheels. The central fortress has been captured, and the rest is an affair of outposts.

My text has for its last word this—the prince's judgment prophesies the world's future judgment. The process which began when Jesus Christ died has for its consummation the divine condemnation of all the evil that still afflicts humanity, and its deprivation of

authority and power to injure. A final judgment will come, and that it will is manifested by the fact that Christ, when He came in the form of a servant and died upon the Cross, judged the prince. When He comes in the form of a King on the great White Throne He will judge the world which He has delivered from its prince.

That thought, my brother, ought to be a hope to us all. Are you glad when you think that there is a day of judgment coming? Does your heart leap up when you realise the fact that the righteousness, which is in the heavens, is sure to conquer and coerce and secure under the hatches the sin that is riding rampant through the world? It was a joy and a hope to men who did not know half as much of the divine love and the divine righteousness as we do. They called upon the rocks and the hills to rejoice, and the trees of the forest to clap their hands before the Lord, 'for He cometh to judge the world.' Does your heart throb a glad Amen to that?

It ought to be a hope; it is a fear; and there are some of us who do not like to have the conviction driven home to us, that the end of the strife between sin and righteousness is that Jesus Christ shall judge the world and take unto Himself His eternal kingdom.

But, my friends, hope or fear, it is a fact, as certain in the future, as the Cross is sure in the past, or the Throne in the present. Let me ask you this question, the question which Christ has sent all His servants to ask—Have you loathed your sin? have you opened your heart to Christ's righteousness? If you have, when men's hearts are failing them for fear, and they 'call on the rocks and the hills to cover them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the Throne,' you will

'have a song as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept,' and lift up your heads, 'for your redemption draweth nigh.' 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness before Him in the day of judgment.'

THE GUIDE INTO ALL TRUTH

'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.'—JOHN xvi. 12-15.

THIS is our Lord's last expansion, in these discourses, of the great promise of the Comforter which has appeared so often in them. First, He was spoken of simply as dwelling in Christ's servants, without any more special designation of His work than was involved in the name. Then, His aid was promised, to remind the Apostles of the facts of Christ's life, especially of His words; and so the inspiration and authority of the four Gospels were certified for us. Then He was further promised as the witness in the disciples to Jesus Christ. And, finally, in the immediately preceding context, we have His office of 'convincing,' or convicting, 'the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' And now we come to that gracious and gentle work which that divine Spirit is declared by Christ to do, not only for that little group gathered round Him then, but for all those who trust themselves to His guidance. He is to be the 'Spirit of truth' to all the ages, who in simple verity will help true hearts to know and love the truth. There are three things in the words before us—first, the avowed incompleteness

of Christ's own teaching; second, the completeness of the truth into which the Spirit of truth guides; and, last, the unity of these two.

I. First, then, we have here the avowed incompleteness of Christ's own teaching.

'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' Now in an earlier portion of these great discourses, we have our Lord asserting that 'all things whatsoever He had heard of the Father He had made known' unto His servants. How do these two representations harmonise? Is it possible to make them agree? Surely, yes. There is a difference between the germ and the unfolded flower. There is a difference between principles and the complete development of these. I suppose you may say that all Euclid is in the axioms and definitions. I suppose you may also say that when you have learned the axioms and definitions, there are many things yet to be said, of which you have not grown to the apprehension. And so our Lord, as far as His frankness was concerned, and as far as the fundamental and seminal principles of all religious truth were concerned, had even then declared all that He had heard of the Father. But yet, in so far as the unfolding of these was concerned, the tracing of their consequences, the exhibition of their harmonies, the weaving of them into an ordered whole in which a man's understanding could lodge, there were many things yet to be said, which that handful of men were not able to bear. And so our Lord Himself here declares that His words spoken on earth are not His completed revelation.

Of course we find in them, as I believe, hints profound and pregnant, which only need to be unfolded

and smoothed out, as it were, and their depths fathomed, in order to lead to all that is worthy of being called Christian truth. But upon many points we cannot but contrast the desultory, brief, obscure references which came from the Master's lips with the more systematised, full, and accurate teaching which came from the servants. The great crucial instance of all is the comparative reticence which our Lord observed in reference to His sacrificial death, and the atoning character of His sufferings for the world. I do not admit that the silence of the Gospels upon that subject is fairly represented when it is said to be absolute. I believe that that silence has been exaggerated by those who have no desire to accept that teaching. But the distinction is plain and obvious, not to be ignored, rather to be marked as being fruitful of blessed teaching, between the way in which Christ speaks about His Cross, and the way in which the Apostles speak about it after Pentecost.

What then? My text gives us the reason. 'You cannot bear them now.' Now the word rendered 'bear' here does not mean 'bear' in the sense of endure, or tolerate, or suffer, but 'bear' in the sense of carry. And the metaphor is that of some weight—it may be gold, but still it is a weight—laid upon a man whose muscles are not strong enough to sustain it. It crushes rather than gladdens. So because they had not strength enough to carry, had not capacity to receive, our Lord was lovingly reticent.

There is a great principle involved in this saying—that revelation is measured by the moral and spiritual capacities of the men who receive it. The light is graduated for the diseased eye. A wise oculist does not flood that eye with full sunshine, but he puts on

veils and bandages, and closes the shutters, and lets a stray beam, ever growing as the curve is perfected, fall upon it. So from the beginning until the end of the process of revelation there was a correspondence between men's capacity to receive the light and the light that was granted; and the faithful use of the less made them capable of receiving the greater, and as soon as they were capable of receiving it, it came. 'To him that hath shall be given.' In His love, then, Christ did not load these men with principles that they could not carry, nor feed them with 'strong meat' instead of 'milk,' until they were able to bear it. Revelation is progressive, and Christ is reticent, from regard to the feebleness of His listeners.

Now that same principle is true in a modified form about us. How many things there are which we sometimes feel we should like to know, that God has not told us, because we have not yet grown up to the point at which we could apprehend them! Compassed with these veils of flesh and weakness, groping amidst the shadows of time, bewildered by the cross-lights that fall upon us from so many surrounding objects, we have not yet eyes able to behold the ineffable glory. He has many things to say to us about that blessed future, and that strange and awful life into which we are to step when we leave this poor world, but 'ye cannot bear them now.' Let us wait with patience until we are ready for the illumination. For two things go to make revelation, the light that reveals and the eye that beholds.

Now one remark before I go further. People tell us, 'Your modern theology is not in the Gospels.' And they say to us, as if they had administered a knock-down blow, 'We stick by Jesus, not Paul.' Well, as I

said, I do not admit that there is no 'Pauline' teaching in the Gospels, but I do confess there is not much. And I say, 'What then?' Why, this, then—it is exactly what we were to expect; and people who reject the apostolic form of Christian teaching because it is not found in the Gospels are flying in the face of Christ's own teaching. You say you will take His words as the only source of religious truth. You are going clean contrary to His own words in saying so. Remember that He proclaimed their incompleteness, and referred us, for the fuller knowledge of the truth of God, to a subsequent Teacher.

II. So, secondly, mark here the completeness of the truth into which the Spirit guides.

I must trouble you with just a word or two of remark as to the language of our text. Note the personality, designation, and office of this new Teacher. 'He,' not '*it*,' He, is the Spirit of truth whose characteristic and weapon is truth. 'He will guide you'—suggesting a loving hand put out to lead; suggesting the graciousness, the gentleness, the gradualness of the teaching. 'Into all truth'—that is no promise of omniscience, but it is the assurance of gradual and growing acquaintance with the spiritual and moral truth which is revealed, such as may be fitly paralleled by the metaphor of men passing into some broad land, of which there is much still to be possessed and explored. Not to-day, nor to-morrow, will all the truth belong to those whom the Spirit guides; but if they are true to His guidance, 'to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant,' and the land will all be traversed at the last. 'He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak.' Mark the parallel between the relation of the Spirit-

Teacher to Jesus, and the relation of Jesus to the Father. Of Him, too, it is said by Himself, 'All things whatsoever I have heard of the Father I have declared unto you.' The mark of Satan is, 'He speaketh of his own'; the mark of the divine Teacher is, 'He speaketh not of Himself, but whatsoever things,' in all their variety, in their continuity, in their completeness, 'He shall hear,'—where? yonder in the depths of the Godhead—'whatsoever things He shall hear there,' He shall show to you, and especially, 'He will show you the things that are to come.' These Apostles were living in a revolutionary time. Men's hearts were 'failing them for fear of the things that were coming on the earth.' Step by step they would be taught the evolving glory of that kingdom which they were to be the instruments in founding; and step by step there would be spread out before them the vision of the future and all the wonder that should be, the world that was to come, the new constitution which Christ was to establish.

Now, if that be the interpretation, however inadequate, of these great and wonderful words, there are but two things needful to say about them. One is that this promise of a complete guidance into truth applies in a peculiar and unique fashion to the original hearers of it. I ventured to say that one of the other promises of the Spirit, which I quoted in my introductory remarks, was the certificate to us of the inspiration and reliableness of these Four Gospels. And I now remark that in these words, in their plain and unmistakable meaning, there lie involved the inspiration and authority of the Apostles as teachers of religious truth. Here we have the guarantee for the authority over our faith, of the words which

came from these men, and from the other who was added to their number on the Damascus road. They were guided 'into *all* the truth,' and so our task is to receive the truth into which they were guided.

The Acts of the Apostles is the best commentary on these words of my text. There you see how these men rose at once into a new region; how the truths about their Master which had been bewildering puzzles to them flashed into light; how the Cross, which had baffled and dispersed them, became at once the centre of union for themselves and for the world; how the obscure became lucid, and Christ's death and the resurrection stood forth to them as the great central facts of the world's salvation. In the book of the Apocalypse we have part of the fulfilment of this closing promise: 'He will show you things to come'; when the Seer was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's Day,' and the heavens were opened, and the history of the Church (whether in chronological order, or in the exhibition of symbols of the great forces which shall be arrayed for and against it, over and over again, to the end of time, does not at present matter), was spread before Him as a scroll.

Now, dear friends, this great principle of my text has a modified application also to us all. For that divine Spirit is given to each of us if we will use Him, is given to any and every man who desires Him, does dwell in Christian hearts, though, alas! so many of us are so little conscious of Him, and does teach us the truth which Christ Himself left incomplete.

Only let me make one remark here. We do not stand on the same level as these men who clustered round Christ on His road to Gethsemane, and received the first fruits of the promise—the Spirit. They, taught

by that divine Guide and by experience, were led into the deeper apprehension of the words and the deeds, of the life and the death, of Jesus Christ our Lord. We, taught by that same Spirit, are led into a deeper apprehension of the words which they spake, both in recording and interpreting the facts of Christ's life and death.

And so we come sharp up to this, 'If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I speak unto him are the commandments of the Lord.' That is how an Apostle put his relation to the other possessors of the divine Spirit. And you and I have to take this as the criterion of all true possession of the Spirit of God, that it bows in humble submission to the authoritative teaching of this book.

III. Lastly, we have here our Lord pointing out the unity of these two.

In the verse on which I have just been commenting He says nothing about Himself, and it might easily appear to the listeners as if these two sources of truth, His own incomplete teaching, and the full teaching of the divine Spirit, were independent of, if not opposed to, one another. So in the last words of our text He shows us the blending of the two streams, the union of the two beams.

'He shall glorify Me.' Think of a *man* saying that! The Spirit who will come from God and 'guide men into all truth' has for His distinctive office the glorifying of Jesus Christ. So fair is He, so good, so radiant, that to make Him known *is* to glorify Him. The glorifying of Christ is the ultimate and adequate purpose of everything that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has done, because the glorifying of Christ is the glorify-

ing of God, and the blessing of the eyes that behold His glory.

‘For He shall take of Mine, and show it unto you.’ All which that divine Spirit brings is Christ’s. So, then, there is no new revelation, only the interpretation of the revelation. The text is given, and its last word was spoken, when ‘the cloud received Him out of their sight,’ and henceforward all is commentary. The Spirit takes of Christ’s; applies the principles, unfolds the deep meaning of words and deeds, and especially the meaning of the mystery of the Cradle, and the tragedy of the Cross, and the mystery of the Ascension, as declaring that Christ is the Son of God, the Sacrifice for the world. Christ said, ‘I am the Truth.’ Therefore, when, He promises, ‘He will guide you into all the truth,’ we may fairly conclude that ‘the truth’ into which the Spirit guides is the personal Christ. It is the whole Christ, the whole truth, that we are to receive from that divine Teacher; growing up day by day into the capacity to grasp Christ more firmly, to understand Him better, and by love and trust and obedience to make Him more entirely our own. We are like the first settlers upon some great island-continent. There is a little fringe of population round the coast, but away in the interior are leagues of virgin forests and fertile plains stretching to the horizon, and snow-capped summits piercing the clouds, on which no foot has ever trod. ‘He will guide you into all truth’; through the length and breadth of the boundless land, the person and the work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

‘All things that the Father hath are Mine, therefore said I that He shall take of Mine and show it unto you.’ What awful words! A divine, teaching Spirit can only teach concerning God. Christ here explains the paradox

of His words preceding, in which, if He were but human, He seems to have given that teaching Spirit an unworthy office, by explaining that whatsoever is His is God's, and whatsoever is God's is His.

My brother! do you believe that? Is that what you think about Jesus Christ? He puts out here an unpresumptuous hand, and grasps all the constellated glories of the divine Nature, and says, 'They are Mine'; and the Father looks down from heaven and says, 'Son! Thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is Thine.' Do you answer, 'Amen! I believe it?'

Here are three lessons from these great words which I leave with you without attempting to unfold them. One is, Believe a great deal more definitely in, and seek a great deal more consciously and earnestly, and use a great deal more diligently and honestly, that divine Spirit who is given to us all. I fear me that over very large tracts of professing Christendom to-day men stand up with very faltering lips and confess, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.' Hence comes much of the weakness of our modern Christianity, of the worldliness of professing Christians, 'and when for the time they ought to be teachers, they have need that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.' 'Quench not, grieve not, despise not the Holy Spirit.'

Another lesson is, Use the Book that He uses—else you will not grow, and He will have no means of contact with you.

And the last is, Try the spirits. If anything calling itself Christian teaching comes to you and does not glorify Christ, it is self-condemned. For none can exalt Him highly enough, and no teaching can present Him too exclusively and urgently as the sole Salvation

and Life of the whole earth. And if it be, as my text tells us, that the great teaching Spirit is to come, who is to 'guide us into all truth,' and therein is to glorify Christ, and to show us the things that are His, then it is also true, 'Hereby know we the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of Antichrist.'

CHRIST'S 'LITTLE WHILES'

'A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? we cannot tell what He saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again a little while, and ye shall see Me?'—JOHN xvi. 16-19.

A SUPERFICIAL glance at the former part of these verses may fail to detect their connection with the great preceding promise of the Spirit who is to guide the disciples 'into all truth.' They appear to stand quite isolated and apart from that. But a little thought will bring out an obvious connection. The first words of our text are really the climax and crown of the promise of the Spirit; for that Spirit is to 'guide into all the truth' by declaring to the disciples the things that are Christ's, and in consequence of that ministration, they are to be able to see their unseen Lord. So this is the loftiest thought of what the divine Spirit does for the Christian heart, that it shows Him a visible though absent Christ.

Then we have in the subsequent part of our text the

blundering of the bewildered disciples and the patient answer of the long-suffering Teacher. So that there are these three points to take up: the times of disappearance and of sight; the bewildered disciples; and the patient Teacher.

I. First of all, then, note the deep teaching of our Lord here, about the times of disappearance and of sight.

The words are plain enough; the difficulty lies in the determination of the periods to which they refer. He tells us that, after a brief interval from the time at which He was speaking, there would come a short parenthesis during which He was not to be seen; and that upon that would follow a period of which no end is hinted at, during which He is to be seen. The two words employed in the two consecutive clauses, for 'sight,' are not the same, and so they naturally suggest some difference in the manner of vision.

But the question arises, Where are the limits of these times of which the Lord speaks? Now it is quite clear, I suppose, that the first of the 'little whiles' is the few hours that intervened between His speaking and the Cross. And it is equally clear that His death and burial began, at all events, the period during which they were not to see Him. But where does the second period begin, during which they are to see Him? Is it at His resurrection or at His ascension, when the process of 'going to the Father' was completed in all its stages; or at Pentecost, when the Spirit, by whose ministration He was to be made visible, was poured out? The answer is, perhaps, not to be restricted to any one of these periods; but I think if we consider that all disciples, in all ages, have a portion in all the rest of these great discourses, and if we note the

absence of any hint that the promised seeing of Christ was ever to terminate, and if we mark the diversity of words under which the two manners of vision are described, and, above all, if we note the close connection of these words with those which precede, we shall come to the conclusion that the full realisation of this great promise of a visible Christ did not begin until that time when the Spirit, poured out, opened the eyes of His servants, and 'they saw His glory.' But however we settle the minor question of the chronology of these periods, the great truth shines out here that, through all the stretch of the ages, true hearts may truly see the true Christ.

If we might venture to suppose that in our text the second of the periods to which He refers, when they did not see Him, was not coterminous with, but preceded, the second 'little while,' all would be clear. Then the first 'little while' would be the few hours before the Cross. 'Ye shall not see Me' would refer to the days in which He lay in the tomb. 'Again, a little while' would point to that strange transitional period between His death and His ascension, in which the disciples had neither the close intercourse of earlier days nor the spiritual communion of later ones. And the final period, 'Ye shall see Me,' would cover the whole course of the centuries till He comes again.

However that may be, and I only offer it as a possible suggestion, the thing that we want to fasten upon for ourselves is this—we all, if we will, may have a vision of Christ as close, as real, as firmly certifying us of His reality, and making as vivid an impression upon us, as if He stood there, visible to our senses. And so, 'by this vision splendid' we may 'be everywhere attended,' and whithersoever we go, have burning before us the

light of His countenance, in the sunshine of which we shall walk.

Brother! that is personal Christianity—to see Jesus Christ, and to live with the thrilling consciousness, printed deep and abiding upon our spirits, that, in very deed, He is by our sides. O how that conviction would make life strong and calm and noble and blessed! How it would lift us up above temptation! 'He endured as seeing Him who is Invisible.' What should terrify us if Christ stood before us? What should charm us if we saw Him? Competing glories and attractions would fade before His presence, as a dim candle dies at noon. It would make all life full of a blessed companionship. Who could be solitary if he saw Christ? or feel that life was dreary if that Friend was by his side? It would fill our hearts with joy and strength, and make us evermore blessed by the light of His countenance.

And how are we to get that vision? Remember the connection of my text. It is because there is a divine Spirit to show men the things that are Christ's that therefore, unseen, He is visible to the eye of faith. And therefore the shortest and directest road to the vision of Jesus is the submitting of heart and mind and spirit to the teaching of that divine Spirit, who uses the record of the Scriptures as the means by which He makes Jesus Christ known to us.

But besides this waiting upon that divine Teacher, let me remind you that there are conditions of discipline which must be fulfilled upon our parts, if any clear vision of Jesus Christ is to bless us pilgrims in this lonely world. And the first of these conditions is—If you want to see Jesus Christ, think about Him. Occupy your minds with Him. If men in the city walk

the pavements with their eyes fixed upon the gutters, what does it matter though all the glories of a sunset are dyeing the western sky? They will see none of them; and if Christ stood beside you, closer to you than any other, if your eyes were fixed upon the trivialities of this poor present, you would not see Him. If you honestly want to see Christ, meditate upon Him.

And if you want to see Him, shut out competing objects, and the dazzling cross-lights that come in and hide Him from us. There must be a 'looking off' unto Jesus.' There must be a rigid limitation, if not excision, of other objects, if we are to grasp Him. If we would see, and have our hearts filled with, the calm sublimity of the solemn, white wedge that lifts itself into the far-off blue, we must not let our gaze stop on the busy life of the valleys or the green slopes of the lower Alps, but must lift it and keep it fixed aloft. Meditate upon Him, and shut out other things.

If you want to see Christ, do His will. One act of obedience has more power to clear a man's eyes than hours of idle contemplation; and one act of disobedience has more power to dim his eyes than anything besides. It is in the dusty common road that He draws near to us, and the experience of those disciples that journeyed to Emmaus may be ours. He meets us in the way, and makes 'our hearts burn within us.' The experience of the dying martyr outside the city gate may be ours. Sorrows and trials will rend the heavens if they be rightly borne, and so we shall see Christ 'standing at the right hand of God.' Rebellious tears blind our eyes, as Mary's did, so that she did not know the Master and took Him for 'the gardener.' Submissive tears purge the eyes and wash them clean to see His

face. To do His will is the sovereign method for beholding His countenance.

Brethren, is this our experience? You professing Christians, do you see Christ? Are your eyes fixed upon Him? Do you go through life with Him consciously nearer to you than any beside? Is He closer than the intrusive insignificances of this fleeting present? Have you Him as your continual Companion? Oh! when we contrast the difference between the largeness of this promise—a promise of a thrilling consciousness of His presence, of a vivid perception of His character, of an unwavering certitude of His reality—and the fly-away glimpses and wandering sight, and faint, far-off views, as of a planet weltering amid clouds, which the most of Christian men have of Christ, what shame should cover our faces, and how we should feel that if we have not the fulfilment, it is our own fault! Blessed they of whom it is true that they see 'no man any more save Jesus only'! and to whom all sorrow, joy, care, anxiety, work, and repose are but the means of revealing that sweet and all-sufficient Presence! 'I have set the Lord always before me, therefore I shall not be moved.'

II. Now notice, secondly, these bewildered disciples.

We find, in the early portion of these discourses, that twice they ventured to interrupt our Lord with more or less relevant questions, but as the wonderful words flowed on, they seem to have been awed into silence; and our Lord Himself almost complains of them that 'None of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?' The inexhaustible truths that He had spoken seem to have gone clear over their heads, but the verbal repetition of the 'little whiles,' and the recurring ring of the sentences, seem to have struck upon their ears. So

passing by all the great words, they fasten upon this minor thing, and whisper among themselves, perhaps lagging behind on the road, as to what He means by these 'little whiles.' The Revised Version is probably correct, or at least it has strong manuscript authority in its favour, in omitting the clause in our Lord's words, 'Because I go to the Father.' The disciples seem to have quoted, not from the preceding verse, but from a verse a little before that in the context, where He said that 'the Spirit will convince the world of righteousness because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more.' The contradiction seems to strike them.

These disciples in their bewilderment seem to me to represent some very common faults which we all commit in our dealing with the Lord's words, and to one or two of these I turn for a moment.

Note this to begin with, how they pass by the greater truths in order to fasten upon a smaller outstanding difficulty. They have no questions to ask about the gifts of the Spirit, nor about the unity of Christ and His disciples as represented in the vine and the branches, nor about what He tells them of the love that 'lays down its life for its friends.' But when He comes into the region of chronology, they are all agog to know the 'when' about which He is so enigmatically speaking.

Now is not that exactly like us, and does not the Christianity of this day very much want the hint to pay most attention to the greatest truths, and let the little difficulties fall into their subordinate place? The central truths of Christianity are the incarnation and atonement of Jesus Christ. And yet outside questions, altogether subordinate and, in comparison with this, unimportant, are filling the attention and the thoughts

of people at present to such an extent that there is great danger of the central truth of all being either passed by, or the reception of it being suspended on the clearing up of smaller questions.

The truth that Christ is the Son of God, who has died for our salvation, is the heart of the Gospel. And why should we make our faith in that, and our living by it, contingent on the clearing up of certain external and secondary questions; chronological, historical, critical, philological, scientific, and the like? And why should men be so occupied in jangling about the latter as that the towering supremacy, the absolute independence, of the former should be lost sight of? What would you think of a man in a fire who, when they brought the fire-escape to him, said, 'I decline to trust myself to it, until you first of all explain to me the principles of its construction; and, secondly, tell me all about who made it; and, thirdly, inform me where all the materials of which it is made came from?' But that is very much what a number of people are doing to-day in reference to 'the Gospel of our salvation,' when they demand that the small questions—on which the central verity does not at all depend—shall be answered and settled before they cast themselves upon that.

Another of the blunders of these disciples, in which they show themselves as our brethren, is that they fling up the attempt to apprehend the obscurity in a very swift despair. 'We cannot tell what He saith, and we are not going to try any more. It is all cloud-land and chaos together.'

Intellectual indolence, spiritual carelessness, deal thus with outstanding difficulties, abandoning precipitately the attempt to grasp them or that which lies behind

them. And yet although there are no gratuitous obscurities in Christ's teaching, He said a great many things which could not possibly be understood at the time, in order that the disciples might stretch up towards what was above them, and, by stretching up, might grow. I do not think that it is good to break down the children's bread too small. A wise teacher will now and then blend with the utmost simplicity something that is just a little in advance of the capacity of the listener, and so encourage a little hand to stretch itself out, and the arm to grow because it is stretched. If there are no difficulties there is no effort, and if there is no effort there is no growth. Difficulties are there in order that we may grapple with them, and truth is sometimes hidden in a well in order that we may have the blessing of the search, and that the truth found after the search may be more precious. The tropics, with their easy, luxuriant growth, where the footfall turns up the warm soil, grow languid men, and our less smiling latitude grows strenuous ones. Thank God that everything is not easy, even in that which is meant for the revelation of all truth to all men! Instead of turning tail at the first fence, let us learn that it will do us good to climb, and that the fence is there in order to draw forth our effort.

There is another point in which these bewildered disciples are uncommonly like the rest of us; and that is that they have no patience to wait for time and growth to solve the difficulty. They want to know all about it now, or not at all. If they would wait for six weeks they would understand, as they did. Pentecost explained it all. We, too, are often in a hurry. There is nothing that the ordinary mind, and often the educated mind, detests so much as uncertainty, and

being consciously baffled by some outstanding difficulty. And in order to escape that uneasiness, men are dogmatical when they should be doubtful, and positively asserting when it would be a great deal more for the health of their souls and of their listeners to say, 'Well, really I do not know, and I am content to wait.' So, on both sides of great controversies, you get men who will not be content to let things wait, for all must be made clear and plain to-day.

Ah, brethren! for ourselves, for our own intellectual difficulties, and for the difficulties of the world, there is nothing like time and patience. The mysteries that used to plague us when we were boys melted away when we grew up. And many questions which trouble me to-day, and through which I cannot find my way, if I lay them aside, and go about my ordinary duties, and come back to them to-morrow with a fresh eye and an unwearied brain, will have straightened themselves out and become clear. We grow into our best and deepest convictions, we are not dragged into them by any force of logic. So for our own sorrows, questions, pains, griefs, and for all the riddle of this painful world,

'Take it on trust a little while,
Thou soon shalt read the mystery right,
In the full sunshine of His smile.'

III. Lastly, and very briefly, a word about the patient Teacher.

'Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him.' He knows all our difficulties and perplexities. Perhaps it is His supernatural knowledge that is indicated in the words before us, or perhaps it is merely that He saw them whispering amongst themselves and so inferred their wish. Be that as it may, we may take the

comfort that we have to do with a Teacher who accurately understands how much we understand and where we grope, and will shape His teaching according to our necessities.

He had not a word of rebuke for the slowness of their apprehension. He might well have said to them, 'O fools and slow of heart to believe!' But that word was not addressed to them then, though two of them deserved it and got it, after events had thrown light on His teaching. He never rebukes us for either our stupidity or for our carelessness, but 'has long patience' with us.

He does give them a kind of rebuke. 'Do ye inquire *among yourselves?*' That is a hopeful source to go to for knowledge. Why did they not ask Him, instead of whispering and muttering there behind Him, as if two people equally ignorant could help each other to knowledge? Inquiry 'among yourselves' is folly; to ask Him is wisdom. We can do much for one another, but the deepest riddles and mysteries can only be wisely dealt with in one way. Take them to Him, tell Him about them. Told to Him, they often dwindle. They become smaller when they are looked at beside Him, and He will help us to understand as much as may be understood, and patiently to wait and leave the residue unsolved, until the time shall come when 'we shall know even as we are known.'

In the context here, Jesus Christ does not explain to the disciples the precise point that troubled them. Olivet and Pentecost were to do that; but He gives them what will tide them over the time until the explanation shall come, in triumphant hopes of a joy and peace that are drawing near.

And so there is a great deal in all our lives. in His

dealings with us, in His revelation of Himself to us, that must remain mysterious and unintelligible. But if we will keep close to Him, and speak plainly to Him in prayer and communion about our difficulties, He will send us triumphant hope and large confidence of a coming joy, that will float us over the bar and make us feel that the burden is no longer painful to carry. Much that must remain dark through life will be lightened when we get yonder; for the vision here is not perfect, and the knowledge here is as imperfect as the vision.

Dear friends! the one question for us all is, Do our eyes fix and fasten on that dear Lord, and is it the description of our own whole lives, that we see Him and walk with Him? Oh! if so, then life will be blessed, and death itself will be but as 'a little while,' when we 'shall not see Him,' and then we shall open our eyes and behold Him close at hand, whom we saw from afar, and with wandering eyes, amidst the mists and illusions of earth. To see Him as He became for our sakes is heaven on earth. To see Him as He is will be the heaven of heaven, and before that Face, 'as the sun shining in His strength,' all sorrows, difficulties, and mysteries will melt as morning mists.

SORROW TURNED INTO JOY

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.'—JOHN xvi. 20-22.

THESE words, to which we have come in the ordinary course of our exposition, make an appropriate text for

Easter Sunday. For their one theme is the joy which began upon that day, and was continued in increasing measure as the possession of Christ's servants after Pentecost. Our Lord promises that the momentary sadness and pain shall be turned into a swift and continual joy. He pledges His word for that, and bids us believe it on His bare word. He illustrates it by that tender and beautiful image which, in the pains and bliss of motherhood, finds an analogy for the pains and bliss of the disciples, inasmuch as, in both cases, pain leads directly to blessedness in which it is forgotten. And He crowns His great promises by explaining to us what is the deepest foundation of our truest gladness, 'I will see you again,' and by declaring that such a joy is independent of all foes and all externals, 'and your joy no man taketh from you.'

There are, then, two or three aspects of the Christian life as a glad life which are set before us in these words, and to which I ask your attention.

I. There is, first, the promise of a joy which is a transformed sorrow.

'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy,' not merely that the one emotion is substituted for the other, but that the one emotion, as it were, becomes the other. This can only mean that *that*, which was the cause of the one, reverses its action and becomes the cause of the opposite. Of course the historical and immediate fulfilment of these words lies in the double result of Christ's Cross upon His servants. For part of three dreary days it was the occasion of their sorrow, their panic, their despair; and then, all at once, when with a bound the mighty fact of the resurrection dawned upon them, that which had been the occasion for their deep grief, for their apparently hopeless despair, sud-

denly became the occasion for a rapture beyond their dreams, and a joy which would never pass. The Cross of Christ, which for some few hours was pain, and all but ruin, has ever since been the centre of the deepest gladness and confidence of a thousand generations.

I do not need to remind you, I suppose, of the value, as a piece of evidence of the historical veracity of the Gospel story, of this sudden change and complete revolution in the sentiments and emotions of that handful of disciples. What was it that lifted them out of the pit? What was it that revolutionised in a moment their notions of the Cross and of its bearing upon them? What was it that changed downhearted, despondent, and all but apostate, disciples into heroes and martyrs? It was the one fact which Christendom commemorates to-day: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That was the element, added to the dark potion, which changed it all in a moment into golden flashing light. The resurrection was what made the death of Christ no longer the occasion for the dispersion of His disciples, but bound them to Him with a closer bond. And I venture to say that, unless the first disciples were lunatics, there is no explanation of the changes through which they passed in some eight-and-forty hours, except the supernatural and miraculous fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That set a light to the thick column of smoke, and made it blaze up a 'pillar of fire.' That changed sorrow into joy. The same death which, before the resurrection, drew a pall of darkness over the heavens, and draped the earth in mourning, by reason of that resurrection which swept away the cloud and brought out the sunshine, became the source of joy. A dead Christ

was the Church's despair; a dead and risen Christ is the Church's triumph, because He is 'the Christ that died . . . and is alive for evermore.'

But, more generally, let me remind you how this very same principle, which applies directly and historically to the resurrection of our Lord, may be legitimately expanded so as to cover the whole ground of devout men's sorrows and calamities. Sorrow is the first stage, of which the second and completed stage is transformation into joy. Every thundercloud has a rainbow lying in its depths when the sun smites upon it. Our purest and noblest joys are transformed sorrows. The sorrow of contrite hearts becomes the gladness of pardoned children; the sorrow of bereaved, empty hearts may become the gladness of hearts filled with God; and every grief that stoops upon our path may be, and will be, if we keep near that dear Lord, changed into its own opposite, and become the source of blessedness else unattainable. Every stroke of the bright, sharp ploughshare that goes through the fallow ground, and every dark winter's day of pulverising frost and lashing tempest and howling wind, are represented in the broad acres, waving with the golden grain. All your griefs and mine, brother, if we carry them to the Master, will flash up into gladness and be 'turned into joy.'

II. Still further, another aspect here of the glad life of the true Christian is, that it is a joy founded upon the consciousness that Christ's eye is upon us.

'I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice.' In other parts of these closing discourses the form of the promise is the converse of this, as for instance—'Yet a little while, and *ye* shall see *Me*.' Here Christ lays hold of the thought by the other handle, and says,

'*I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.*' Now these two forms of putting the same mutual relationship, of course, agree, in that they both of them suggest, as the true foundation of the blessedness which they promise, the fact of communion with a present Lord. But they differ from one another in colouring, and in the emphasis which they place upon the two parts of that communion. '*Ye shall see Me*' fixes attention upon us and our perception of Him. '*I will see you*' fixes attention rather upon Him and His beholding of us. '*Ye shall see Me*' speaks of our going out after Him and being satisfied in Him. '*I will see you*' speaks of His perfect knowledge, of His loving care, of His tender, compassionate, complacent, ever-watchful eye resting upon us, in order that He may communicate to us all needful good.

And so it requires a loving heart on our part, in order to find joy in such a promise. '*His eyes are as a flame of fire,*' and He sees all men; but unless our hearts cleave to Him and we know ourselves to be knit to Him by the tender bond of love from Him, accepted and treasured in our souls, then '*I will see you again*' is a threat and not a promise. It depends upon the relation which we bear to Him, whether it is blessedness or misery to think that He whose flaming eye reads all men's sins and pierces through all hypocrisies and veils has it fixed upon us. The sevenfold utterance of His words to the Asiatic churches—the last recorded words of Jesus Christ—begins with '*I know thy works.*' It was no joy to the lukewarm professors at Laodicea, nor to the church at Ephesus which had lost the freshness of its early love, that the Master knew them; but to the faithful souls in Philadelphia, and to the few in Sardis, who '*had not defiled their garments,*' it was

blessedness and life to feel that they walked in the sunshine of His face.

Is there any joy to us in the thought that the Lord Christ sees us? Oh! if our hearts are really His, if our lives are as truly built on Him as our profession of being Christians alleges that they are, then all that we need for the satisfaction of our nature, for the supply of our various necessities, or as an armour against temptation, and an amulet against sorrow, will be given to us, in the belief that His eye is fixed upon us. *There is the foundation of the truest joy for men.* 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time when their corn and their wine abound.' One look *towards* Christ will more than repay and abolish earth's sorrow. One look *from* Christ will fill our hearts with sunshine. All tears are dried on eyes that meet His. Loving hearts find their heaven in looking into one another's faces, and if Christ be our love, our deepest and purest joys will be found in His glance and our answering gaze.

If one could anyhow take a bit of the Arctic world and float it down into the tropics, the ice would all melt, and the white dreariness would disappear, and a new splendour of colour and of light would clothe the ground, and an unwonted vegetation would spring up where barrenness had been. And if you and I will only float our lives southward beneath the direct vertical rays of that great 'Sun of Righteousness,' then all the dreary winter and ice of our sorrows will melt, and joy will spring. Brother! the Christian life is a glad life, because Christ, the infinite and incarnate Lover of our souls, looks upon the heart that loves and trusts Him.

III. Still further, note how our Lord here sets forth His disciples' joy as beyond the reach of violence and independent of externals.

'No man taketh it from you.' Of course, that refers primarily to the opposition and actual hostility of the persecuting world, which that handful of frightened men were very soon to face; and our Lord assures them here that, whatsoever the power of the devil working through the world may be able to filch away from them, it cannot filch away the joy that He gives. But we may extend the meaning beyond that reference.

Much of our joy, of course, depends upon our fellows, and disappears when they fade away from our sight and we struggle along in a solitude, made the more dreary because of remembered companionship. And much of our joy depends upon the goodwill and help of our fellows, and they can snatch away all that so depends. They can hedge up our road and make it uncomfortable and sad for us in many ways, but no man but myself can put a roof over my head to shut me out from God and Christ; and as long as I have a clear sky overhead, it matters very little how high may be the walls that foes or hostile circumstances pile around me, and how close they may press upon me. And much of our joy necessarily depends upon and fluctuates with external circumstances of a hundred different kinds, as we all only too well know. But we do not need to have all our joy fed from these surface springs. We may dig deeper down if we like. If we are Christians, we have, like some beleaguered garrison in a fortress, a well in the courtyard that nobody can get at, and which never can run dry. 'Your joy no man taketh from you.'

As long as we have Christ, we cannot be desolate

If He and I were alone in the universe, or, paradoxical as it may sound, if He and I were alone, and the universe were not, I should have all that I needed and my joy would be full, if I loved Him as I ought to do.

So, my brother! let us see to it that we dig deep enough for the foundation of our blessedness, and that it is on Christ and nothing less infinite, less eternal, less unchangeable, that we repose for the inward blessedness which nothing outside of us can touch. That is the blessedness which we may all possess, 'For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us' from the eye and the heart of the risen Christ who lives for us.

But remember, though externals have no power to rob us of our joy, they have a very formidable power to interfere with the cultivation of that faith, which is the essential condition of our joy. They cannot force us away from Christ, but they may tempt us away. The sunshine did for the traveller in the old fable what the storm could not do; and the world may cause you to think so much about it that you forget your Master. Its joys may compel Him to hide His face, and may so fill your eyes that you do not care to look at His face; and so the sweet bond may be broken, and the consciousness of a living, loving Jesus may fade, and become filmy and unsubstantial, and occasional and interrupted. Do you see to it that what the world cannot do by violence and directly, it does not do by its harlot kisses and its false promises, tempting you away from the paths where alone you can meet your Master.

IV. Lastly, note that this life of joy, which our Lord

here speaks of, is made certain by the promise of a faithful Christ.

‘Verily, verily, I say unto you,’—He was accustomed to use that impressive and solemn formula, when He was about to speak words beyond the reach of human wisdom to discover, or of prime importance for men to accept and believe. He tells these men, who had nothing but His bare word to rely upon, that the astonishing thing which He is going to promise them will certainly come to pass. He would encourage them to rest an unfaltering confidence, for the brief parenthesis of sorrow, upon His faithful promise of joy. He puts His own character, so to speak, in pawn. His words are precisely equivalent in meaning to the solemn Old Testament words which are represented as being the oath of God, ‘As I live! saith the Lord,’ ‘You may be as sure of this thing as you are of My divine existence, for all My divine Being is pledged to you to bring it about.’ ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you,’ ‘You may be as sure of this thing as you are of Me, for all that I am is pledged to fulfil the words of My lips.’

So Christ puts His whole truthfulness at stake, as it were; and if any man who has ever loved Jesus Christ and trusted Him aright has not found this ‘joy unspeakable and full of glory,’ then Jesus Christ has said the thing that is not.

Then why is it that so many professing Christians have such joyless lives as they have? Simply because they do not keep the conditions. If we will love Him so as to set our hearts upon Him, if we will desire Him as our chief good, if we will keep our eyes fixed upon Him, then, as sure as He is living and is the Truth, He will flood our hearts with blessedness, and His joy will pour into our souls as the flashing tide

rushes into some muddy and melancholy harbour, and sets everything dancing that was lying stranded on the slime. If, my brother, you, a professing Christian, know but little of this joy, why, then, it is *your* fault, and not *His*. The joyless lives of so many who say that they are His disciples cast no shadow of suspicion upon His veracity, but they do cast a very deep shadow of doubt upon their profession of faith in Him.

Is your religion joyful? Is your joy religious? The two questions go together. And if we cannot answer these questions in the light of God's eye as we ought to do, let these great promises and my text prick us into holier living, into more consistent Christian character, and a closer walk with our Master and Lord.

The out-and-out Christian is a joyful Christian. The half-and-half Christian is the kind of Christian that a great many of you are—little acquainted with 'the joy of the Lord.' Why should we live half way up the hill and swathed in mists, when we might have an unclouded sky and a visible sun over our heads, if we would only climb higher and walk in the light of His face?

'IN THAT DAY'

'And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'—JOHN xvi. 23, 24.

OUR Lord here sums up the prerogatives and privileges of His servants in the day that was about to dawn and to last till He came again. There is nothing absolutely new in the words; substantially the promises contained in them have appeared in former parts of these dis-

courses under somewhat different aspects and connections. But our Lord brings them together here, in this condensed repetition, in order that the scattered rays, being thus focussed, may have more power to illuminate with certitude, and to warm into hope. 'Ye shall ask Me nothing. . . . Ask and ye shall receive. . . . Your joy shall be full.' These are the jewels which He sets in a cluster, the juxtaposition making each brighter, and gives to us for a parting keepsake.

Now it is to be noticed that the two askings which are spoken of here are expressed by different words in the Greek. Our English word 'ask' means two things, either to question or to request; to ask in the sense of interrogating, in order to get information and teaching, or in the sense of beseeching, in order to get gifts. In the former sense the word is employed in the first clause of my text, with distinct reference to the disciples' desire, a moment or two before, to ask Him a very foolish question; and in the second sense it is employed in the central portion of my text.

So, then, there are three things here as the marks of the Christian life all through the ages: the cessation of the ignorant questions addressed to a present Christ; the satisfaction of desires; and the perfecting of joy. These are the characteristics of a true Christian life. My brother, are they in any degree the characteristics of yours?

I. Note then, first, the end of questionings.

'In that day ye shall ask Me nothing,' and do not you think that when the disciples heard that, they would be tempted to say, 'Then what in all the world are we to do?' To them the thought that He was not to be at their sides any longer, for them to go to with their difficulties, must have seemed despair rather

than advance; but in Christ's eyes it was progress. He tells them and us that we gain by losing Him, and are better off than they were, precisely because He does not any longer stand at our sides for us to question. It is better for a boy to puzzle out the meaning of a Latin book by his own brains and the help of a dictionary than it is lazily to use an interlinear translation. And, though we do not always feel it, and are often tempted to think how blessed it would be if we had an infallible Teacher visible here at our sides, it is a great deal better for us that we have not, and it is a step in advance that He has gone away. Many eager and honest Christian souls, hungering after certainty and rest, have cast themselves in these latter days into the arms of an infallible Church. I doubt whether any such questioning mind has found what it sought; and I am sure that it has taken a step downwards, in passing from the spiritual guidance realised by our own honest industry and earnest use of the materials supplied to us in Christ's word, to any external authority which comes to us to save us the trouble of thinking, and to confirm to us truth which we have not made our own by search and effort. We gain by losing the visible Christ; and He was proclaiming progress and not retrogression, when He said: 'In that day ye shall ask Me no more questions.'

For what have we instead? We have two things: a completed revelation, and an inward Teacher.

We have a completed revelation. Great and wonderful and unspeakably precious as were and are the words of Jesus Christ, His deeds are far more. The death of Christ has told us things that Christ before His death could not tell. The resurrection of Christ has cast light upon all the darkest places of man's

destiny which Christ, before His resurrection, could not by any words so illuminate. The ascension of Christ has opened doors for thought, for faith, for hope, which were fast closed, notwithstanding all His teachings, until He had burst them asunder and passed to His throne. And the facts which are substituted for the bodily presence of Jesus with His disciples tell us a great deal more than they could ever have drawn from Him by questionings, however persistent and however wisely directed. We have a completed revelation, and therefore we need 'ask Him nothing.'

And we have a divine Spirit that will come to us if we will, and teach us by means of blessing the exercise of our own faculties, and guiding us, not, indeed, into the uniform perception of the intellectual aspects of Christian truth, but into the apprehension and the loving possession, as a power in our lives, of all the truth that we need to mould our characters and to raise us to the likeness of Himself.

Only, brother! let us remember what such a method of teaching demands from us. It needs that we honestly use the revelation that is given us; it needs that we loyally, lovingly, trustfully, submit ourselves to the teaching of that Spirit who will dwell in us; it needs that we bring our lives up to the height of our present knowledge, and make everything that we know a factor in shaping what we do and what we are. If thus we will to do His will, 'we shall know of the doctrine'; if thus we yield ourselves to the divine Spirit, we shall be taught the practical bearings of all essential truth; and if thus we ponder the facts and principles that are enshrined in Christ's life, and the Apostolic commentary on them, as preserved for us in the Scripture, we shall not need to envy those that

could go to Him with their questions, for *He* will come to *us* with His all-satisfying answers.

Ah! but you say experience does not verify these promises. Look at a divided Christendom; look at my own difficulties of knowing what I am to believe and to think. Well, as for a divided Christendom, saintly souls are all of one Church, and however they may formulate the intellectual aspects of their creed, when they come to pray, they say the same things. Roman Catholic and Protestant, and Quaker and Churchman, and Calvinist and Arminian, and Greek and Latin Christians—all contribute to the hymn-book of every sect; and we all sing their songs. So the divisions are like the surface cracks on a dry field, and a few inches down there is continuity. As for the difficulty of knowing what I am to believe and think about controverted questions, no doubt there will remain many gaps in the circle of our knowledge; no doubt there will be much left obscure and unanswered; but if we will keep ourselves near the Master, and use honestly and diligently the helps that He gives us—the outward help in the Word, and the inward help in His teaching Spirit—we shall not ‘walk in darkness,’ but shall have light enough given to be to us ‘the Light of Life.’

Brother, keep close to Christ, and Christ—present though absent—will teach you.

II. Secondly, satisfied desires.

This second great promise of my text, introduced again by the solemn affirmation, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you,’ substantially appeared in a former part of these discourses with a very significant difference. ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name that will I do.’ ‘If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it.’ There Christ presented Himself as the Answerer of the

petitions, because His more immediate purpose was to set forth His going to the Father as His elevation to a yet loftier position. Here, on the other hand, He sets forth the Father as the Answerer of the petitions, because His purpose is to point away from undue dependence on His own corporeal presence. But the fact that He thus, as occasion requires, substitutes the one form of speech for the other, and indifferently represents the same actions as being done by Himself and by the Father in heaven, carries with it large teachings which I do not dwell upon now. Only I would ask you to consider how much is involved in that fact, that, as a matter of course, and without explanation of the difference, our Lord alternates the two forms, and sometimes says, 'I will do it,' and sometimes says, 'The Father will do it.' Does it not point to that great and blessed truth, 'Whatsoever thing the Father doeth, that also doeth the Son likewise?'

But passing from that, let me ask you to note very carefully the limitation, which is here given to the broad universality of the declaration that desires shall be satisfied. 'If ye shall ask anything in My name'; there is the definition of Christian prayer. And what does it mean? Is a prayer, which from the beginning to the end is reeking with self-will, hallowed because we say, as a kind of charm at the end of it, 'For Christ's sake. Amen'? Is *that* praying in Christ's name? Surely not! What is the 'name' of Christ? His whole revealed character. So these disciples could not pray in His name 'hitherto,' because His character was not all revealed. Therefore, to pray in His name is to pray, recognising what He is, as revealed in His life and death and resurrection and ascension, and to base all our dependence of accept-

ance of our prayers upon that revealed character. Is that all? Are any kind of wishes, which are presented in dependence upon Christ as our only Hope and Channel of divine blessing, certain to be fulfilled? Certainly not. To pray 'in My name' means yet more than that. It means not only to pray in dependence upon Christ as our only Ground of hope and Source of acceptance and God's only Channel of blessing, but it means exactly what the same phrase means when it is applied to us. If I say that I am doing something in your name, that means on your behalf, as your representative, as your organ, and to express your mind and will. And if we pray in Christ's name, that implies, not only our dependence upon His merit and work, but also the harmony of our wills with His will, and that our requests are not merely the hot products of our own selfishness, but are the calm issues of communion with Him. *Thus* to pray requires the suppression of self. Heathen prayer, if there be such a thing, is the violent effort to make God will what I wish. Christian prayer is the submissive effort to make my wish what God wills, and that is to pray in Christ's name.

My brother! do we construct our prayers thus? Do we try to bring our desires into harmony with Him, before we venture to express them? Do we go to His footstool to pour out petulant, blind, passionate, unsanctified wishes after questionable and contingent good, or do we wait until He fills our spirits with longings after what it must be His desire to give, and then breathe out those desires caught from His own heart, and echoing His own will? Ah! The discipline that is wanted to make men pray in Christ's name is little understood by multitudes amongst us.

Notice how certain such prayer is of being answered. Of course, if it is in harmony with the will of God, it is sure not to be offered in vain. Our Revised Version makes a slight alteration in the order of the words in the first clause of this promise by reading, ‘If ye ask anything of the Father He will give it you *in My name*.’ God’s gifts come down through the same channel through which our prayer goes up. We ask in the name of Christ, and get our answers in the name of Christ.

But, whether that be the true collocation of ideas or not, mark the plain principle here, that only desires which are in harmony with the divine will are sure of being satisfied. What is a bad thing for a child cannot be a good thing for a man. What is a foolish and wicked thing for a father down here to do cannot be a kind and a wise thing for the Father in the heavens to do. If you wish to spoil your child you say, ‘What do you want, my dear? tell me and you shall have it. And if God were saying anything like that to us, through the lips of Jesus Christ His Son, in the text, it would be no blessing, but a curse. He knows a great deal better what is good for us; and so He says: ‘Bring your wishes into line with My purpose, and then you will get them’; ‘Delight thyself in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thine heart.’ If you want God most you will be sure to get Him; if your heart’s desires are after Him, your heart’s desires will be satisfied. ‘The young lions do roar and suffer hunger.’ That is the world’s way of getting good; fighting and striving and snarling, and forcibly seeking to grasp, and there is hunger after all. There is a better way than that. Instead of striving and struggling to snatch and to keep a perishable and

questionable portion, let us wait upon God and quiet our hearts, stilling them into the temper of communion and conformity with Him, and we shall not ask in vain.

He who prays in Christ's name must pray Christ's prayer, 'Not My will, but Thine be done.' And then, though many wishes may be unanswered, and many weak petitions unfulfilled, and many desires unsatisfied, the essential spirit of the prayer will be answered, and, His will being done in us and on us, our wishes will acquiesce in it and desire nothing besides. To him who can thus pray in Christ's name in the deepest sense, and after Christ's pattern, every door in God's treasure-house flies open, and he may take as much of the treasure as he desires. The Master bends lovingly over such a soul, and looks him in the eyes, and with outstretched hand says, 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.'

III. Lastly, the perfect joy which follows upon these two.

'That your joy may be fulfilled.' Again we have a recurrence of a promise that has appeared in another connection in an earlier part of this discourse; but the connection here is worthy of notice. The promise is of joy that comes from the satisfaction of meek desires in unison with Christ's will. Is it possible then, that, amidst all the ups and downs, the changes and the sorrows of this fluctuating, tempest-tossed life of ours we may have a deep and stable joy? 'That your joy may be full,' says my text, or 'fulfilled,' like some jewelled, golden cup charged to the very brim with rich and quickening wine, so that there is no room for a drop more. Can it be that ever, in this world, men shall be happy up to the very limits of their capacity?

Was anybody ever so blessed that he could not be more so? Was your cup ever so full that there was no room for another drop in it? Jesus Christ says that it may be so, and He tells us how it may be so. Bring your desires into harmony with God's, and you will have none unsatisfied amongst them; and so you will be blessed to the full; and though sorrow comes, as of course it will come, still you may be blessed. There is no contradiction between the presence of this deep, central joy and a surface and circumference of sorrow. Rather we need the surrounding sorrow, to concentrate, and so to intensify, the central joy in God. There are some flowers which only blow in the night; and white blossoms are visible with startling plainness in the twilight, when all the flaunting purples and reds are hid. We do not know the depth, the preciousness, the power of the ‘joy of the Lord,’ until we have felt it shining in our hearts in the midst of the thick darkness of earthly sorrow, and bringing life into the very death of our human delights. It may be ours on the conditions that my text describes.

My dear friends! there are only two courses before us. Either we must have a life with superficial, transitory, incomplete gladness, and an aching centre of vacuity and pain, or we may have a life which, in its outward aspects and superficial appearance, has much about it that is sad and trying, but down in the heart of it is calm and joyful. Which of the two do you deem best, a superficial gladness and a rooted sorrow, or a superficial sorrow and a central joy? ‘Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.’ But, on the other hand, the ‘ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon

their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'

THE JOYS OF 'THAT DAY'

'These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in My Name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.'—JOHN XVI. 25-27.

THE stream which we have been tracking for so long in these discourses has now nearly reached its close. Our Lord, in these all but final words, sums up the great salient features which He has already more than once specified, of the time when His followers shall live with an absent and yet present Christ. He reiterates here substantially just what He has been saying before, but in somewhat different connection, and with some slight expansion. And this reiteration of the glad features of the day which was about to dawn suggests how much the disciples needed, and how much we need, to have repeated over and over again the blessed and profound lessons of these words.

What a sublime self-repression there was in the Master! Not one word escapes from His lips of the personal pain and agony into which He had to plunge and be baptized, before that day could dawn. All that was crushed down and kept back, and He only speaks to the disciples and to us of the joy that comes to them, and not at all of the bitter sorrow by which it is bought. There are set forth in these words, as it seems to me, especially three characteristics which belong to the whole period between the ascension of Jesus Christ and His coming again for judgment. It is a day of continual

and clearer teaching by Him. It is a day of desires in His name. It is a day of filial experience of a Father's love. These are the characteristics of the Christian period, and they ought to be the characteristics of our individual Christian life. My brother! are they the characteristics of yours?

Let us note them in order.

I. First, our Lord tells us that the whole period of the Christian life upon earth is to be a period of continuous and clearer teaching by Himself.

'Hitherto I have spoken to you in proverbs,' or parables. The word means, not only a comparison or parable, but also, and perhaps primarily, a mysterious and enigmatical saying. The reference is, of course, directly to the immediately preceding thoughts, in which His departure and the sorrow that accompanied it and was to merge into joy, were described under that touching figure of the woman in travail. But the reference must be extended very much farther than that. It includes not only this discourse, but the whole of His teaching by word whilst He was here upon earth.

Now the first thing that strikes me here is this strange fact. Here is a man who knew Himself to be within four-and-twenty hours of His death, and knew that scarcely another word of instruction was to come from His lips upon earth, calmly asserting that, for all the subsequent ages of the world's history, He is to continue its Teacher. We know how the wisest and profoundest of earthly teachers have their lips sealed by death, so as that no counsel can come from them any more, and their disciples long in vain for responses from the silenced oracle, which is dumb whatever new problems may arise. But Jesus Christ

calmly poses before the world as not having His teaching activity in the slightest degree suspended by that fact which puts a conclusive and complete close to all other teachers' words. Rather He says that after death He will, more clearly than in life, be the Teacher of the world.

What does He mean by that? Well, remember first of all the facts which followed this saying—the Cross, the Grave, Olivet, the Heavens, the Throne. These were still in the future when He spoke. And have not these—the bitter passion, the supernatural resurrection, the triumphant ascension, and the everlasting session of the Son at the right hand of God—taught the whole world the meaning of the Father's name, and the love of the Father's heart, and the power of the Father's Son, as nothing else, not even the sweetest and tenderest of His utterances, could have taught them? When, then, He declares the continuance of His teaching functions unbroken through death and beyond it, He refers partly to the future facts of His earthly manifestation, and still more does He refer to that continuous teaching which, by that divine Spirit whom He sends, is granted to every believing soul all through the ages.

This great truth, which recurs over and over again in these discourses of our Lord, is far too much dropped out of the consciousness and creeds of the modern Christian Church. We call ourselves Christ's disciples. If there be disciples, there must be a Master. His teaching is by no means merely the effect of the recorded facts and utterances of the Lord, preserved here in the Book for us, and to be pondered upon by ourselves, but it is also the hourly communication, to waiting hearts and souls that keep themselves near the

Lord, of deeper insight into His will, of larger views of His purposes, of a firmer grasp of the contents of Scripture, and a more complete subjection of the whole nature to the truth as it is in Jesus. Christian men and women! do you know anything about what it is to learn of Christ in the sense that He Himself, and no poor human voice like mine, nor even merely the records of His past words and deeds as garnered in these Gospels and expounded by His Apostles, is the source of your growing knowledge of Him? If we would keep our hearts and minds clearer than we do of the babble of earthly voices, and be more loyal and humble and constant and patient in our sitting on the benches in Christ's school till the Master Himself came to give us His lessons, these great words of my text would not, as they so often do in the mass of professing Christians, lack the verification of experience and the assurance that it is so with us. Have you sat in Christ's school, and do you know the secret and illuminative whispers of His teaching? If not, there is something wrong in your Christian character, and something insincere in your Christian profession.

Notice, still further, that our Lord here ranks that subsequent teaching before all that He said upon earth, great and precious as it was. Now I do not mean for one moment to allege that fresh communications of truth, uncontained in Scripture, are given to us in the age-long and continuous teaching of Jesus Christ. That I do not suppose to be the meaning of the great promises before us, for the facts of revelation were finished when He ascended, and the inspired commentary upon the facts of revelation was completed with these writings which follow the Gospels in our New Testament. But Christ's teaching brings us up to the

understanding of the facts and of the commentary upon them which Scripture contains, so that what was parable or proverb, dimly apprehended, mysterious and enigmatical when it was spoken, and what remains mysterious and enigmatical to us until we grow up to it, gradually becomes full of significance and weighty with a plain and certain meaning. This is the teaching which goes on through the ages—the lifting of His children to the level of apprehending more and more of the inexhaustible and manifold wisdom which is stored for us in this Book. The mine has been worked on the surface, but the deeper it goes the richer is the lode; and no ages will exhaust the treasures that are hid in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He uses the new problems, the new difficulties, the new circumstances of each successive age, and of each individual Christian, in order to evolve from His word larger lessons, and to make the earlier lessons more fully and deeply understood. And this generation, with all its new problems, with all its uneasiness about social questions, with all its new attitude to many ancient truths, will find that Jesus Christ is, as He has been to all past generations,—the answer to all its doubts, using even these doubts as a means of evolving the deeper harmonies of His Word, and of unveiling in the ancient truth more than former generations have seen in it. ‘Brethren, I write unto you no new commandment. Again, a new commandment I write unto you.’ The inexhaustible freshness of the old word taught us anew, with deeper significance and larger applications, by the everlasting Teacher of the Church, is the hope that shines through these words. I commend to you, dear brethren, the one simple, personal question, Have I submitted myself

to that Teacher, and said to men and systems and preachers and books and magazines, and all the rest of the noisy and clamorous tongues that bewilder under pretence of enlightening this generation—have I said to them all, 'Hold your peace! and let me, in the silence of my waiting soul, hear the Teacher Himself speak to me. Speak, Lord! for Thy servant heareth. Teach me Thy way and lead me, for Thou art my Master, and I the humblest of Thy scholars'?

II. In the next place, another of the glad features of this dawning day is that it is to be a day of desires based upon Christ, and Christlike.

'In that day ye shall ask in My name.' Our translators have wisely put a colon at the end of that clause, in order that we may not hurry over it too quickly in haste to get to the next one. For there is a substantial blessing and privilege wrapped up in it. Our Lord has just been saying the same thing in the previous verses, but He repeats it here in order to emphasise it, and to set it by the subsequent words in a somewhat different light. But I dwell upon it for a very simple, practical purpose. I have already explained in former sermons the full, deep meaning of that phrase, 'asking in Christ's name,' and have suggested to you that it implies two things—the one, that our desires should all be based upon His great work as the only ground of our acceptance with God; and the other, that our desires should all be such as represent His heart and His mind. When we 'ask in His name' we ask, first, for His sake, and, second, as in His person. And such desires, resting their hopes of answer solely upon His mighty sacrifice and all-sufficient merit, and shaped accurately and fully after the pattern of the wishes that are dear to His heart, are to be the prerogative

and the joy of His servants, in the new 'day' that is about to dawn.

Note how beautifully this thought, of wishes moulded into conformity with Jesus Christ, and offered in reliance upon His great sacrifice, follows upon that other thought, 'I will tell you plainly of the Father.' The Master's voice speaks, revealing the paternal heart, the scholar's voice answers with desires kindled by the revelation. Longings and aspirations humbly offered for His sake, and after the pattern of His own, are our true response to His teaching voice. As the astronomer, the more powerful his telescope, though it may resolve some of the nebulae that resisted feebler instruments, only has his bounds of vision enlarged as he looks through it, and sees yet other and mightier star-clouds lying mysterious beyond its ken—so each new influx and tidal wave of knowledge of the Father, which Christ gives to His waiting child, leads on to enlarged desires, to longings to press still further into the unexplored mysteries of that magnificent and boundless land, and to nestle still closer into the infinite heart of God. He declares to us the Father, and the answer of the child to the declaration of the Father is the cry, 'Abba! Father! show me yet more of Thy heart.' Thus aspiration and fruition, longing and satisfaction in unsatiated and inexhaustible and unwearying alternation, are the two blessed poles between which the life of a Christian may revolve in smoothness and music.

My friend! is that anything like the transcript of our experience, that the more we know of God, the more we long to know of, and to possess, Him? and the more we long to know of, and to possess, Him, the more full, gracious, confidential, tender, and con-

tinuous are the teachings of our Master? Is not this a far higher level of Christian life than that we live upon? And why so? Is Christ's word faithless? Hath He forgotten to be gracious? Was this promise of His idle wind? Or is it that you and I have never grasped the fulness of privileges that He bestows upon us?

III. Note, lastly, that that day is to be a day of filial experience of a Father's love.

'I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.' Jesus Christ does not deny His intercession. He simply does not bring it into evidence here. To deny it would have been impossible, for soon afterwards we find Him saying, 'I pray for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine.' But He does not emphasise it here, in order that He may emphasise another blessed source of solace—viz., that to those who listen to the Master's teaching, and have their desires moulded into harmony with His, and their wishes and hopes all based upon His sacrifice and work, the divine Father's love directly flows. There is no need of any intercession to turn Him to be merciful. Men sometimes caricature the thought of the intercession of Christ, as if it meant that He, by His prayer, bent the reluctant will of the Father in heaven. All such horrible misconceptions Christ sweeps out of the field here, even whilst there remains, in the fact that the prayers of which He is speaking are offered in His name, the substance and reality of all that we mean by the intercession of Jesus Christ.

And now note that God loves the men who love Jesus Christ. So completely does the Father identify

Himself with the Son, that love to Christ is love to Him, and brings the blessed answer of His love to us. Whosoever loves Christ loves God.

Whosoever loves Christ must do so, believing that He 'came forth from God.' There are the two characteristics of a Christian disciple,—faith in the divine mission of the Son, and love that flows from faith. Now, of course, it does not follow from the words before us, that this divine love which comes down upon the heart which loves Christ is the original and first flow of that love towards that heart. 'We love Him because He first loved us.' Christ is not here tracking the stream to its source, but is pointing to it midway in its flow. If you want to go up to the fountain-head you have to go up to the divine Father's heart, who loved when there was no love in us; and, because He loved, sent the Son. First comes the unmotivated, spontaneous, self-originated, undeserved, infinite love of God to sinners and aliens and enemies; then the Cross and the mission of Jesus Christ; then the faith in His divine mission; then the love which is the child of faith, as it grasps the Cross and recognises the love that lies behind it; and then, after that, the special, tender, and paternal love of God falling upon the hearts that love Him in His Son. There is nothing here in the slightest degree to conflict with the grand universal truth that God loves enemies and sinners and aliens. But there is the truth, as precious as the other, that they who have 'known and believed the love that God hath to us' live under the selectest influences of His loving heart, and have a place in its tenderness which it is impossible that any should have who do not so love. And that sweet commerce of a divine love answering a human, which itself is the

answer to a prior divine love, brings with it the firm confidence that prayers in His name shall not be prayers in vain.

So, dear friends, growing knowledge, an ever-present Teacher, the peace of calm desires built upon Christ's Cross and fashioned after Christ's Spirit, and the assurance in my quiet and filial heart that my Father in the heavens loves me, and will neither give me ‘serpents’ when I ask for them, thinking them to be ‘fishes,’ nor refuse ‘bread’ when I ask for it—these things ought to mark the lives of all professing Christians. Are they our experience? If not, why are they not, but because we do not believe that ‘Thou art come forth from God,’ nor love Thee as we ought?

‘FROM’ AND ‘TO’

‘I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.’—JOHN xvi. 28.

THESE majestic and strange words are the proper close of our Lord's discourse, what follows being rather a reply to the disciples' exclamation. There is nothing absolutely new in them, but what is new is the completeness and the brevity with which they cover the whole ground of His being, work, and glory. They fall into two halves, each consisting of two clauses; the former half describing our Lord's *descent*, the latter His *ascent*. In each half the two clauses deal with the same fact, considered from the two opposite ends as it were—the point of departure and the point of arrival. ‘I came forth *from* the Father, and am come *into* the world: again, I *leave* the world, and go *to* the Father.’ But the first point of departure is the last point of

arrival, and the end comes round to the beginning. Our Lord's earthly life is, as it were, a jewel enclosed within the flashing gold of His eternal dwelling with God.

So I think we shall best apprehend the scope, and appropriate to ourselves the blessing and power of these words, if we deal with the four points to which they call our attention—the dwelling with the Father; the voluntary coming to the earth; the voluntary departure from the earth; and, once more, the dwelling with the Father. We must grasp them all if we would know the whole Christ and all that He is able to do and to be to us and to the world. So, then, I deal simply with these four points.

I. Note then, first, the dwelling with the Father.

If we adopt the most probable reading of the first clause of my text, it is even more forcible than in our version: 'I came forth *out of* the Father.' Such an egress implies a being *in* the Father in a sense ineffable for our words, and transcending our thoughts. It implies a far deeper and closer relation than even that of juxtaposition, companionship, or outward presence.

Now, in these great words there is involved obviously, to begin with, that, during His earthly life, our Lord bore about with Him the remembrance and consciousness of an individual existence prior to His life on earth. I need not remind you how frequently such hints drop from His lips—'Before Abraham was, I am,' and the like. But beyond that solemn thought of a remembered previous existence there is this other one—that the words are the assertion by Christ Himself of a previous, deep, mysterious, ineffable union with the Father. On such a subject wisdom and reverence bid us speak only as we hear; but I cannot refrain from

emphasising the fact that, if this fourth Gospel be a genuine record of the teaching of Jesus Christ—and, if it is not, what genius was he who wrote it?—if it be a genuine record of the teaching of Jesus Christ, then nothing is more plain than that over and over again, in all sorts of ways, by implication and by direct statement, to all sorts of audiences, friends and foes, He reiterated this tremendous claim to have ‘dwelt in the bosom of the Father,’ long before He lay on the breast of Mary. What did He mean when He said, ‘No man hath ascended up into heaven save He which came down from heaven’? What did He mean when He said, ‘What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before’? What did He mean when He said, ‘I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me’? And what did He mean when, in the midst of the solemnities of that last prayer, He said, ‘Glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was’?

Dear friends! it seems to me that if we know anything about Jesus Christ, we know *that*. If we cannot believe that He thus spoke, we know nothing about Him on which we can rely. And so, without venturing to enlarge at all upon these solemn words, I leave this with you as a plain fact, that the meekest, lowliest, and most sane and wise of religious teachers made deliberately over and over again this claim, which is either absolutely true, and lifts Him into the region of the Deity, or else is fatal to His pretensions to be either meek or modest, or wise or sane, or a religious teacher to whom it is worth our while to listen.

II. Note, secondly, the voluntary coming into the world.

'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world.' We all talk in a loose way about men coming into the world when they are born; but the weight of these words and the solemnity of the occasion on which they were spoken, and the purpose for which they were spoken—viz., to comfort and to illuminate these disciples—forbid us to see such a mere platitude as that in them. There would have been no consolation in them unless they meant something a great deal more than the undeniable fact that Jesus Christ was born, and the melancholy fact that Jesus Christ was about to die.

'I am *come* into the world.' There has been a Man who chose to be born. There has been a Man who appeared here, not 'of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,' but by His own free choice. He willed to take upon Him the form of humanity. Now the voluntariness of the entrance of Jesus Christ into the conditions of our human life is all-important for us, for it underlies the whole value of that life and its whole power to be blessing and good to us. It underlies, for instance, the personal sinlessness of Jesus Christ, and hence His power to bring a new beginning of pure and perfect life into the midst of humanity. All the rest of mankind, knit together by that mysterious bond of natural descent which only now for the first time is beginning to receive its due attention on the part of men of science, by heredity have the taint upon them. And if Jesus Christ is only one of the series, then there is no deliverance in Him, for there is no sinlessness in that life. However fair its record may seem on the surface, there is beneath, somewhere or other, the leprosy that infects us all. Unless He came in another fashion from all the rest of us, He came with the same

sin as all the rest of us, and He is no deliverer from sin. Rather He is one of the series who, like the melancholy captives on the road to Siberia, each carries a link of the hopeless chain that binds them all together. But, if it be true that of His own will He took to Himself humanity, and was born as the Scripture tells us He was born, His birth being His 'coming' and not His being brought, then, being free from taint, He can deliver us from taint, and, Himself unbound by the chain, He can break it from off our necks. The stream is fouled from its source downwards, and flows on, every successive drop participant of the primeval pollution. But, down from the white snows of the eternal hills of God, there comes into it an affluent which has no stain on its pure waters, and so can purge that into which it enters. Jesus Christ willed to be born, and to plant a new beginning of holy life in the very heart of humanity which henceforth should work as leaven.

Let me remind you, too, that this voluntary assumption of our nature is all-important to us, for unless we preserve it clear to our minds and hearts, the power to sway our affections is struck away from Jesus Christ. Unless He voluntarily took upon Himself the nature which He meant to redeem, why should I be thankful to Him for what He did, and what right has He to claim my love? But if He willingly came down amongst us, and 'to this end was born, and for this cause,' of His own loving heart, 'came into the world,' then I am knit to Him by cords that cannot be broken. One thing only saves for Jesus Christ the unbounded and perpetual love of mankind, and that is, that from His own infinite and perpetual love He came into the world. We talk about kings leaving their palaces and putting on the rags of the beggar, and learning 'love

in huts where poor men lie,' and making experience of the conditions of their lowliest subjects. But here is a fact, infinitely beyond all these legends. It is set forth for us in a touching fashion, in the incident that almost immediately preceded these parting words of our Lord, when 'Jesus, knowing that He came forth from God, laid aside His garments and took a towel, and girded Himself,' and washed the foul feet of these travel-stained men. That was a parable of the Incarnation. The consciousness of His divine origin was ever with Him, and that consciousness led Him to lay aside the garments of His majesty, and to gird Himself with the towel of service. That He had a body round which to wrap it was more humiliation than that He wrapped it round the body which He took. And we may learn there what it is that gives Him His supreme right to our devotion and our surrender—viz., that, 'being in the form of God, He thought not equality with God a thing to be covetously retained, but made Himself of no reputation, and was found in fashion as a Man.'

III. Note the voluntary leaving the world.

The stages of that departure are not distinguished. They are threefold in fact—the death, the resurrection, the ascension, and in all three we have the majestic, spontaneous energy of Christ as their cause.

There was a voluntary death. I have so often had occasion to insist upon that, in the course of these sermons, that I do not need to dwell upon it now. Let me remind you only how distinctly and in what various forms that thought is presented to us in the Scriptures. We have our Lord's own words about His having 'power to lay down His life.' We have in the story of the Passion hints that seem to suggest that His relation to death, to which He is about to bow His head, was

altogether different from that of ours. For instance, we read: ‘Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit’; and ‘He gave up the Spirit.’ We have hints of a similar nature in the very swiftness of His death and unexpected brevity of His suffering, to be accounted for by no natural result of the physical process of crucifixion. The fact is that Jesus Christ is the Lord of death, and was so even when He seemed to be its Servant, and that He never showed Himself more completely the Prince of Life and the Conqueror of Death than when He gave up His life and died, not because He must, but because He would. There is a scene in a modern book of fiction of a man sitting on a rock and the ocean stretching round him. It reaches high upon his breast, but it threatens not his life, till he, sitting there in his calm, bows his head beneath the wave and lets it roll over him. So Christ willed to die, and died because He willed.

There was also a voluntary resurrection by His own power; for although Scripture sometimes represents His rising again from the dead as being the Father’s attestation of the Son’s finished work, it also represents it as being, in accordance with His own claim of ‘power to lay down My life, and to take it again,’ the Son’s triumphant egress from the prison into which, for the moment, He willed to pass. Jesus ‘was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,’ but also Jesus rose from the dead by His own power.

There was also a voluntary ascension to the heavens. There was no need for Elijah’s chariot of fire. There was no need for a whirlwind to sweep a mortal to the sky. There was no need for any external vehicle or agency whatsoever. No angels bore Him up upon their wings. But, the cords of duty which bound Him to

earth being cut, He rose to His own native sphere; and, if one might so say, the natural forces of His supernatural life bore Him, by inverted gravitation, upward to the place which was His own. He ascended by His own inherent power.

Thus, by a voluntary death, He became the Sacrifice for our sins; by the might of His self-effected resurrection He proclaimed Himself the Lord of death and the resurrection for all that trust Him; and by ascending up on high He draws our hearts' desires after Him, so that we, too, as we see Him lost from our sight, behind the bright Shekinah cloud that stooped to conceal the last stages of His ascension from our view, may return to our lowly work 'with great joy,' and 'set our affection on things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.'

IV. So, lastly, we have here the dwelling again with the Father.

But that final dwelling with God is not wholly identical with the initial one. The earthly life was no mere parenthesis, and He who returned to the Throne carried with Him the manhood which He had assumed, and bore it thither into the glory in which the Word had dwelt from the beginning. And this is the true consolation which Christ offered to these His weeping servants, and which He still offers to us His waiting children, that now the manhood of Jesus Christ is exalted to participation in the divine glory, and dwells there in the calm, invisible sweetness and solemnity of fellowship with the Father.

If that be so, it is no mere abstract dogma of theology but it touches our daily life at all points, and is essential to the fullness of our satisfaction and our rest in Christ.

'We see not all things put under Him, but we see Jesus.' Our Brother is elevated to the Throne, and, if I might so say, He makes the fortunes of the family, and none of them will be poor as long as He is so rich. He sends us from the far-off land where He is gone precious gifts of its produce, and He will send for us to share His throne one day.

Christ's ascension to the Father is the elevation of our best and dearest Friend to the Throne of the Universe, and the hands that were pierced for us on the Cross hold the helm and sway the sceptre of Creation, and therefore we may calmly meet all events.

The elevation of Jesus Christ to the Throne fills Heaven for our faith, our imagination, and our hearts. How different it is to look up into those awful abysses, and to wonder where, amidst their crushing infinitude, the spirits of dear ones that are gone are wandering, if they are at all; and to look up and to think 'My Christ hath passed through the Heavens,' and is somewhere with a true Body, and with Him all that loved Him. Without an ascended Christ we recoil from the cold splendours of an unknown Heaven, as a rustic might from the unintelligible magnificence of a palace. But if we believe that He is 'at the right hand of God,' then the far-off becomes near, and the vague becomes definite, and the unsubstantial becomes solid, and what was a fear becomes a joy, and we can trust ourselves and the dear dead in His hands, knowing that where He is they are, and that in Him they and we have all that we need.

So, dear friends! it all comes to this—make sure that you have hold of the whole Christ for yourselves. His earthly life is little without the celestial halo that rings it round. His life is nothing without His death. His

death without His resurrection and ascension may be a little more pathetic than millions of other deaths, but is nothing, really, to us. And the life and death and resurrection are not apprehended in their fullest power until they are set between the eternal glory before and the eternal glory after.

These four facts—the dwelling in the Father; the voluntary coming to earth; the voluntary leaving earth; and, again, the dwelling with the Father—are the walls of the strong fortress into which we may flee and be safe. With them it ‘stands four square to every wind that blows.’ Strike away one of them, and it totters into ruin. Make the whole Christ your Christ; for nothing less than the whole Christ, ‘conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, . . . crucified, dead, and buried, . . . ascended into Heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God,’ is strong enough to help your infirmities, vast enough to satisfy your desires, loving enough to love you as you need, or able to deliver you from your sins, and to lift you to the glories of His own Throne.

GLAD CONFESSION AND SAD WARNING

‘His disciples said unto Jesus, Lo! now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.’—JOHN XVI. 29-32.

THE first words of these wonderful discourses were, ‘Let not your heart be troubled.’ They struck the key-note of the whole. The aim of all was to bring

peace and confidence unto the disciples' spirits. And this joyful burst of confession which wells up so spontaneously and irrepressibly from their hearts, shows that the aim has been reached. For a moment sorrow, bewilderment, dullness of apprehension, had all passed away, and the foolish questioners and non-receptive listeners had been lifted into a higher region, and possessed insight, courage, confidence. The last sublime utterance of our Lord had gathered all the scattered rays into a beam so bright that the blindest could not but see, and the coldest could not but be warmed.

But yet the calm, clear eye of Christ sees something not wholly satisfactory in this outpouring of the disciples' confidence. He does not reject their imperfect faith, but He warns them, as if seeing the impending hour of denial which was so terribly to contradict the rapture of that moment. And then, with most pathetic suddenness, He passes from them to Himself; and in a singularly blended utterance lets us get a glimpse into His deep solitude and the companions that shared it.

My words now make no attempt at anything more than is involved in following the course of thought in the words before us.

I. Note the disciples' joyful confession.

Their words are permeated throughout with allusions to the previous promises and sayings of our Lord, and the very allusions show how shallow was their understanding of what they thought so plain. He had said to them that, in that coming day which was so near its dawn, He would speak to them 'no more in proverbs, but show them plainly of the Father'; and they answer, with a kind of rapture of astonishment,

that the promised day has come already, and that even now He is speaking to them 'plainly,' and without mysterious sayings. Did they understand His words when they thought them so plain? 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world? Again I leave the world and go unto the Father,' that summary statement of the central mysteries of Christianity, which the generations have found to be inexhaustible, and which to so many minds has been absolutely incredible, seemed to the shallow apprehension of these disciples to be sun-clear. If they had understood what He meant, could they have spoken thus, or have left Him so soon?

They begin with what they believed to be a fact, His clear utterance. Then follows a conviction which has allusion to His previous words. 'Now,' say they, 'we know that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee.' He had said to them, 'In that day ye shall ask Me nothing'; and from the fact that he had interpreted their unspoken words, and had anticipated their desire to ask what they durst not ask, they draw, and rightly draw, the conclusion of His divine Omniscience. They think that therein, in His answer to their question before it is asked, is the fulfilment of that great promise. Was that all that He meant? Certainly not. Did He merely mean to say, 'You will ask Me nothing, because I shall know what you want to know, without your asking'? No! But He meant, 'Ye shall ask Me nothing, because in that day you will have with you an illuminating Spirit who will solve all your difficulties.' So, again, a shallow interpretation empties the words which they accept of their deepest and most precious meaning.

And then they take yet a further step. First, they begin with a fact; then from that they infer a conviction; and now, upon the basis of the inferred conviction, they rear a faith, 'We believe that Thou camest forth from God.' But what they meant by 'coming forth from God' fell far short of the greatness of what He meant by the declaration, and they stand, in this final, articulate confession of their faith, but a little in advance of Nicodemus the Rabbi, and behind Peter the Apostle when he said: 'Thou art the Son of the living God.'

So their confession is a strangely mingled warp and woof of insight and of ignorance. And they may stand for us both as examples to teach us what we ought to be, and as beacons teaching us what we should not be.

Let me note just one or two lessons drawn from the disciples' demeanour and confession.

The first remark that I would make is that here we learn what it is that gives life to a creed—experience. These men had, over and over again, in our Lord's earlier utterances, heard the declaration that 'He came forth from God'; and in a sort of fashion they believed it. But, as so many of our convictions do, it lay dormant and half dead in their souls. But now, rightly or wrongly, experience had brought them into contact, as they thought, with a manifest proof of His divine Omniscience, and the torpid conviction flashed all up at once into vitality. The smouldering fire of a mere piece of abstract belief was kindled at once into a glow that shed warmth through their whole hearts; and although they had professed to believe long ago that He came from God, now, for the first time, they grasp it as a living reality. Why?

Because experience had taught it to them. It is the only teacher that teaches us the articles of our creed in a way worth learning them. Every one of us carries professed beliefs, which lie there inoperative, bedridden, in the hospital and dormitory of our souls, until some great necessity or sudden circumstance comes that flings a beam of light upon them, and then they start and waken. We do not know the use of the sword until we are in battle. Until the shipwreck comes, no man puts on the lifebelt in his cabin. Every one of us has large tracts of Christian truth which we think we most surely believe, but which need experience to quicken them, and need us to grow up into the possession of them. Of all our teachers who turn beliefs assented to into beliefs really believed none is so mighty as Sorrow; for that makes a man lay a firm hold on the deep things of God's Word.

Then another lesson that I draw from this glad confession is—the bold avowal that always accompanies certitude. These men's stammering tongues are loosed. They have a fact to base themselves upon. They have a piece of assured knowledge inferred from the fact. They have a faith built upon the certitude of what they know. Having this, out it all comes in a gush. No man that believes with all his heart can help speaking. You silent Christians are so, because you do not more than half grasp the truth that you say you hold. 'Thy word, when shut up in my bones, was like a fire'; and it ate its way through all the dead matter that enclosed it, until at last it flamed out heaven high. Can you say, 'We know and we believe,' with unfaltering confidence? Not 'we argue'; not 'we humbly venture to think that on the whole';

not 'we are inclined rather to believe'; but 'we *know* —that Thou knowest all things, and that Thou hast come from God.' Seek for that blessed certitude of knowledge, based upon the facts of individual experience, which 'makes the tongue of the dumb sing,' and changes all the deadness of an outward profession of Christianity into a living, rejoicing power.

Then, further, I draw this lesson. Take care of indolently supposing that you understand the depths of God's truth. These Apostles fancied that they had grasped the whole meaning of the Master's words, and were glad in them. They fed on them, and got something out of them; but how far they were from the true perception of their meaning! This generation abhors mystery, and demands that the deepest truths of the highest subject, which is religion, shall be so broken down into mincemeat that the 'man in the street' can understand them in the intervals of reading the newspaper. There are only too many of us who are disposed to grasp at the most superficial interpretation of Christian truth, and lazily to rest ourselves in that. A creed which has no depth in it is like a picture which has no distance. It is flat and unnatural, and self-condemned by the very fact. It is better that we should feel that the smallest word that comes from God is like some little leaf of a water plant on the surface of a pond; if you lift that you draw a whole trail after it, and nobody knows how far off and how deep down are the roots. It is better that we should feel how Infinity and Eternity press in upon us on all sides, and should take as ours the temper that recognises that till the end we are but learners, seeing 'in a glass, in a riddle,' and therefore

patiently waiting for light and strenuously striving to stretch our souls to the width of the infinite truth of God.

II. So, then, look, in the second place, at the sad questions and forebodings of the Master.

‘Do ye *now* believe?’ That does not cast doubt on the reality of their faith so much as on its permanence and power. ‘Behold the hour cometh that ye shall be scattered’—as He had told them a little while before in the upper room, like a flock when the shepherd is stricken down—‘every man to his own.’ He does not reject their imperfect homage, though He discerns so clearly its imperfection and its transiency, but sadly warns them to beware of the fleeting nature of their present emotion; and would seek to prepare them, by the knowledge, for the terrible storm that is going to break upon them.

So let us learn two or three simple lessons. One is that the dear Lord accepts imperfect surrender, ignorant faith and love, of which He knows that it will soon turn to denial. Oh! if He did not, what would become of us all? *We* reject half hearts; we will not have a friendship on which we cannot rely. The sweetness of vows is all sucked out of them to our apprehension, if we have reason to believe that they will be falsified in an hour. But the patient Master was willing to put up with what you and I will not put up with; and to accept what we reject; and be pleased that they gave Him even that. His ‘charity suffereth long, and is kind.’ Let us not be afraid to bring even imperfect consecration—

‘A little faith all undisproved’—

to His merciful feet.

Then another lesson is the need for Christian men sedulously to search and make sure that their inward life corresponds with their words and professions. I wonder how many thousands of people will stand up this day and say, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only Son,' whose words would stick in their throats if that question of the Master's was put to them, '*Do ye now believe?*' And I wonder how many of us are the fools of our own verbal acknowledgments of Christ. Self-examination is not altogether a wholesome exercise, and it may easily be carried too far, to the destruction of the spontaneity and the gladness of the Christian life. A man may set his pulse going irregularly by simply concentrating his attention upon it, and there may be self-examination of the wrong sort, which does harm rather than good. But, on the other hand, we all need to verify our position, lest our outward life should fatally slip away from correspondence with our inward. Our words and acts of Christian profession and service are like bank notes. What will be the end if there is a whole ream of such going up and down the world, and no balance of bullion in the cellars to meet them? Nothing but bankruptcy. Do you see to it that your reserve of gold, deep down in your hearts, always leaves a margin beyond the notes in circulation issued by you. And in the midst of your professions hear the Master saying, '*Do ye now believe?*'

Another lesson that I draw is, trust no emotions, no religious experiences, but only Him to whom they turn.

These men were perfectly sincere, and there was a glow of gladness in their hearts, and a real though

imperfect faith when they spoke. In an hour's time where were they?

We often deal far too hard measure to these poor disciples, in our estimate of their conduct at that critical moment. We talk about them as cowards. Well, they were better and they were worse than cowards; for their courage failed second, but their faith had failed first. The Cross made them dastards because it destroyed their confidence in Jesus Christ.

'We trusted.' Ah! what a world of sorrow there is in those two final letters of that word! 'We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel.' But they do not trust it any more, and so why should they put themselves in peril for One on whom their faith can no longer build?

Would we have been any better if we had been there? Suppose you had stood afar off and seen Jesus die on the cross, would *your* faith have lived? Do we not know what it is to be a great deal more exuberant in our professions of faith—and real faith it is, no doubt—in some quiet hour when we are with Him by ourselves, than when swords are flashing and we are in the presence of His antagonists? Do we not know what it is to grasp conviction at one moment, and the next to find it gone like a handful of mist from our clutch? Is our Christian life always lived upon one high uniform level? Have we no experience of hours of exhaustion coming after deep religious emotion? 'Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone'; there will not be many stones flung if that law be applied. Let us all, recognising our own weakness, trust to nothing, either in our convictions or our emotions, but only to Him, and cry, 'Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!'

III. Lastly, note the lonely Christ and His companion.

'Ye shall leave Me alone'; there is sadness, though it be calm, in that clause, and then, I suppose, there was a moment's pause before the quiet voice began again: 'And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me.' There are two currents there, both calm; but the one bright and the other dark.

Jesus was the loneliest man that ever lived. All other forms of human solitude were concentrated in His. He knew the pain of unappreciated aims, unaccepted love, unbelieved teachings, a heart thrown back upon itself. No man understood Him, no man knew Him, no man deeply and thoroughly loved Him or sympathised with Him, and He dwelt apart. He felt the pain of solitude more sharply than sinful men do. Perfect purity is keenly susceptible; a heart fully charged with love is wounded sore when the love is thrown back, and all the more sorely the more unselfish it is.

Solitude was no small part of the pain of Christ's passion. Remember the pitiful appeal in Gethsemane, 'Tarry ye here and watch with Me!' Remember the threefold vain return to the sleepers in the hope of finding some sympathy from them. Remember the emphasis with which, more than once in His life, He foretold the loneliness of His death. And then let us understand how the bitterness of the cup that He drank had for not the least bitter of its ingredients the sense that He drank it alone.

Now, dear friends! some of us, no doubt, have to live outwardly solitary lives. We all of us live alone after all fellowship and communion. Physicists tell us that in the most solid bodies the atoms do not touch. Hearts come closer than atoms, but yet, after all, we

die alone, and in the depths of our souls we all live alone. So let us be thankful that the Master knows the bitterness of solitude, and has Himself trod that path.

Then we have here the calm consciousness of unbroken communion. Jesus Christ's sense of union with the Father was deep, close, constant, in manner and measure altogether transcending any experience of ours. But still He sets before us a pattern of what we should aim at in these great words. They show the path of comfort for every lonely heart. 'I am not alone, for the Father is with Me.' If earth be dark, let us look to Heaven. If the world with its millions seems to have no friend in it for us, let us turn to Him who never leaves us. If dear ones are torn from our grasp, let us grasp God. Solitude is bitter; but, like other bitters, it is a tonic. It is not all loss if the trees which with their leafy beauty shut out the sky from us are felled, and so we see the blue.

Christ's company is to us what the Father's fellowship was to Christ. He has borne solitude that He might be the companion of all the lonely, and the same voice which said, 'Ye shall leave Me alone,' said also, 'I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'

But *that* communion of Christ with the Father was broken, in that awful hour when He cried: 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' We tread there on the verge of mysteries, beyond our comprehension; but this we know—that it was our sin and the world's, made His by His willing identifying of Himself with us, which built up that black wall of separation. That hour of utter desolation, forsaken by God, deserted by men, was the hour of the world's redemption. And

Jesus Christ was forsaken by God and deserted by men, that you and I might never be either the one or the other, but might find in His sweet and constant companionship at once the society of man and the presence of God.

PEACE AND VICTORY

'These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.'
—JOHN xvi. 33.

So end these wonderful discourses, and so ends our Lord's teaching before His passion. He gathers up in one mighty word the total intention of these sweet and deep sayings which we have so long been pondering together. He sketches in broad outline the continual characteristics of the disciples' life, and closes all with the strangest shout of victory, even at the moment when He seems most utterly defeated.

We shall, I think, best lay on our hearts and minds the spirit and purpose of these words if we simply follow their course, and look at the three things which Christ emphasises here: the inward peace which is His purpose for us; the outward tribulation which is our certain fate; and the courageous confidence which Christ's victory for us gives.

I. Note, then, first, the inward peace.

'These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace.' Peace is not lethargy; and it is very remarkable to notice how, in immediate connection with this great promise, there occur words which suggest its opposite—tribulation and battle. 'In the world ye have tribulation.' 'I have overcome'—that means a fight. These are to go side by side with the

peace that He promises. The two conditions belong to two different spheres. The Christian life bifurcates, as it were, into a double root, and moves in two realms—‘in Me’ and ‘in the world.’ And the predicates and characteristics of these two lives are, in a large measure, diametrically opposite. So here, without any contradiction, our Lord brackets together these two opposite conditions as both pertaining to the life of a devout soul. He promises a peace which co-exists with tribulation and disturbance, a peace which is realised in and through conflict and struggle. The tree will stand, with its deep roots and its firm bole, unmoved, though wildest winds may toss its branches and scatter its leaves. In the fortress, beleaguered by the sternest foes, there may be, right in the very centre of the citadel, a quiet oratory through whose thick walls the noise of battle and the shout of victory or defeat can never penetrate. So we may live in a centre of rest, however wild may be the uproar in the circumference. ‘In Me . . . peace,’ that is the innermost life. ‘In the world . . . tribulation,’ that is only the surface.

But, then, note that this peace, which exists with, and is realised through, tribulation and strife, depends upon certain conditions. Our Lord does not say, ‘Ye have peace,’ but ‘These things I have spoken that you *may* have it.’ It is a possibility; and He lays down distinctly and plainly here the twofold set of conditions, in fulfilment of which a Christian disciple may dwell secure and still, in the midst of all confusion. Note, then, these two.

It is peace, if we have it at all, *in Him*. Now you remember how emphatically and loftily, as one of the very key-notes of these discourses, our Lord has spoken

to us, in them, of 'dwelling in Him' as the prerogative and the duty of every Christian. We are in Him as in an atmosphere. In Him our true lives are rooted as a tree in the soil. We are in Him as a branch in the vine, in Him as the members in a body, in Him as the residents in a house. We are in Him by simple faith, by the trust that rests all upon Him, by the love that finds all in Him, by the obedience that does all for Him. And it is only when we are 'in Christ' that we rest, and realise peace. All else brings distraction. Even delights trouble. The world may give excitement, the world may give vulgar and fleeting joys, the world may give stimulus to much that is good and true in us, but there is only one thing that gives peace, and that is that our hearts should dwell in the Fortress, and should ever be surrounded by Jesus Christ. Brother! let nothing tempt us down from the heights, and out from the citadel where alone we are at rest; but in the midst of all the pressing duties, the absorbing cares, the carking anxieties, the seducing temptations of the world, and in the presence of all the necessity for noble conflict which the world brings to every man that is not its slave, let us try to keep the roots of our lives in contact with that soil from which they draw all their nourishment, and to wrap ourselves round with the life of Jesus Christ, which shall make an impenetrable shield between us and 'the fiery darts of the wicked.' Keep on the lee side of the break-water and your little cock-boat will ride out the gale. Keep Christ between you and the hurtling storm, and there will be a quiet place below the wall where you may rest, hearing not the loud winds when they call. 'These things have I spoken that in Me ye might have peace.'

But there is another condition. Christ speaks the great words which have been occupying us so long, that they may bring to us peace. I need not do more than remind you, in a sentence, of the contents of these wonderful discourses. Think of how they have spoken to us of our Brother's ascension to Heaven to prepare a place for us; of His coming again to receive us to Himself; of His presence with us in His absence; of His indwelling in us and ours in Him; of His gift to us of a divine Spirit. If we believed all these things; if we realised them and lived in the faith of them; if we meditated upon them in the midst of our daily duties; and if they were real to us, and not mere words written down in a Book, how should anything be able to disturb us, or to shake our settled confidence? Cleave to the words of the Master, and let them pour into your hearts the quietness and confidence which nothing else can give. And then, whatsoever storms may be around, the heart will be at rest. We find peace nowhere else but where Mary found her repose, and could shake off care and 'trouble about many things,' sitting at the feet of Jesus, wrapt in His love and listening to His word.

II. Then note, secondly, the outward tribulation which is the certain fate of His followers.

Of course there is a very sad and true sense in which the warning, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation,' applies to all men. Pain and sickness, loss and death, the monotony of hard, continuous, unwelcome toil, hopes blighted or disappointed even in their fruition, and all the other 'ills that flesh is heir to,' afflict us all. But our Lord is not speaking here about the troubles that befall men as men, nor about the chastisement that befalls them as sinners, nor about the evils which

dog them because they are mortal or because they are bad, but of the yet more mysterious sorrows which fall upon them because they are good. 'In the world ye have tribulation,' is the proper rendering and reading. It had already begun, and it was to be the standing condition and certain fate of all that followed Him.

I have already said that the Christian life moves in two spheres, and hence there must necessarily be antagonism and conflict. Whoever realises the inward life in Christ will more or less, and sooner or later, find himself coming into hostile collision with lives which only move on the surface and belong to the world. If you and I are Christians after the pattern of Jesus Christ, then we dwell in the midst of an order of things which is not constituted on or for the principles that regulate our lives and the objects at which we aim. And hence, in that fundamental discordance between the Christian life and society as it is constituted, there must always be, if there be honesty and consistency on the side of the Christian man, more or less of collision between him and it. All that you regard as axiomatic the world regards as folly, if you take Christ for your Teacher. All that you labour to secure the world does not care to possess, if you have Him for your aim. All that you live to seek it has abandoned; all that you desire to obey it will not even consult, if you are taking Christ and His law for your rule. And therefore there must come, sooner or later, and more or less intensely in all Christian lives, opposition and tribulation. You cannot get away from the necessity, so it is as well to face it.

No doubt the form of antagonism varies. No doubt the more the world is penetrated by Christian principles divorced from their root and source, the less vehement

and painful will the collision be. But *there is* the gulf, and there it will remain, until the world is a Church. No doubt some portion of the battlements of organised Christianity has tumbled into the ditch, and made it a little less deep. Christians have dropped their standard far too much, and so the antagonism is not so plain as it ought to be, and as it used to be, and as, some day, it will be. But there it is, and if you are going to live out and out like a Christian man, you will get the old sneers flung at you. You will be 'crotchety,' 'impracticable,' 'spoiling sport,' 'not to be dealt with,' 'a wet blanket,' 'pharisaical,' 'bigoted,' and all the rest of the pretty words which have been so frequently used about the men that try to live like Jesus Christ. Never mind! 'In the world ye have tribulation.' 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,' the branding-iron which tells to whom the slave belongs. And if it is His initials that I carry I may be proud of the marks.

But at any rate there will be antagonism. You young men in your warehouses, you men that go on 'Change, we people that live by our pens or our tongues, and find ourselves in opposition to much of the tendencies of the present day—we have all, in our several ways, to bear the cross. Do not let us be ashamed of it, and, above all, do not let us, for the sake of easing our shoulders, be unfaithful to our Master. 'In the world ye have tribulation'; and the Christian man's peace has to be like the rainbow that lives above the cataract—still and radiant, whilst it shines above the hell of white waters that are tortured below.

III. Lastly, notice the courageous confidence which comes from the Lord's victory.

‘Be of good cheer!’ It is the old commandment that rang out to Joshua when, on the departure of Moses, the conduct of the war fell into his less experienced hands: ‘Be strong, and of a good courage; only be thou strong and very courageous.’ So says the Captain of salvation, leaving His soldiers to face the current of the heady fight in the field. Like some leader who has climbed the ramparts, or hewed his way through the broken ranks of the enemies, and rings out the voice of encouragement and call to his followers, our Captain sets before us His own example: ‘I have overcome the world,’ He said that the day before Calvary. If that was victory, what would defeat have been?

Notice, then, how our Lord’s life was a true battle. The world tried to draw Him away from God by appealing to things desirable to sense, as in the wilderness; or to things dreadful to sense, as on the cross; and both the one and the other form of temptation He faced and conquered. It was no shadow fight which evoked this pæan of victory from His lips. The reality of His conflict is somewhat concealed from us by reason of its calm and the completeness of His conquest. We do not appreciate the force that drives a planet upon its path because it is calm and continuous and silent, but the power that kept Jesus Christ continually faithful to His Father, continually sure of that Father’s presence, continually averse to all self-will and selfish living, was a power mightier than all others that have been manifested in the history of humanity. The Captain of our salvation has really fought the fight before us.

But mark, again, that our Lord’s life is the type of all victorious life. The world conquers me when it draws me away from God, when it makes me its slave, when

it coaxes me to trust it, and urges to despair if I lose it. The world conquers me when it comes between me and God, when it fills my desires, when it absorbs my energies, when it blinds my eyes to the things unseen and eternal. I conquer the world when I put my foot upon its temptations, when I crush it down, when I shake off its bonds, and when nothing that time and sense, with their delights or their dreadful-nesses, can bring, prevents me from cleaving to my Father with all my heart, and from living as His child here. Whoso thus coerces Time and Sense to be the servants of his filial love has conquered them both, and whoso lets them draw him away from God is beaten, however successful he may dream himself to be and men may call him.

My friends! there is a lesson for Manchester people. Jesus Christ was not a very successful man according to the standard of Market Street and the Exchange. He made but a poor thing of the world, and He was going to be martyred on the cross the day after He said these words. And yet that was victory. Ay! Many a man beaten down in the struggle of daily life, and making very little of it, according to our vulgar estimate, is the true conqueror. Success means making the world a stepping-stone to God.

Still further, note our share in the Master's victory — '*I have overcome the world. Be ye of good cheer.*' That seems an irrelevant way of arguing. What does it matter to me though He has overcome? So much the better for Him; but what good is it to me?

It may aid us somewhat to more strenuous fighting, if we know that a brother has fought and conquered, and I do not under-estimate the blessing and the benefit of the life of Jesus Christ, as recorded in these

Scriptures, even from that, as I conceive it, miserably inadequate and imperfect point of view. But the victory of Jesus Christ is of extremely little practical use to me, if all the use of it is to show me how to fight. Ah! you must go a deal deeper than that. 'I have overcome the world, and I will come and put My overcoming Spirit into your weakness, and fill you with My own victorious life, and make your hands strong to war and your fingers to fight; and be in you the conquering and omnipotent Power.'

My friends! Jesus Christ's victory is ours, and we are victors in it, because He is more than the pattern of brave warfare, He is even the Son of God, who gave Himself for us, and gives Himself to us, and dwells in us our Strength and our Righteousness.

Lastly, remember that the condition of that victory's being ours is the simple act of reliance upon Him and upon it. The man who goes into the battle as that little army of the Hebrews did against the wide-stretching hosts of the enemy, saying, 'O Lord! we know not what to do, but our eyes are up unto Thee,' will come out 'more than conqueror through Him that loved him.' For 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

THE INTERCESSOR

'These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me, are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have

known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.'—JOHN xvii. 1-19.

WE may well despair of doing justice to the deep thoughts of this prayer, which volumes would not exhaust. Who is worthy to speak or to write about such sacred words? Perhaps we may best gain some glimpses of their great and holy sublimity by trying to gather their teaching round the centres of the three petitions, 'glorify' (vs. 1, 5), 'keep' (v. 11), and 'sanctify' (v. 17).

I. In verses 1-5, Jesus prays for Himself, that He may be restored to His pre-incarnate glory; but yet the prayer desires not so much that glory as affecting Himself, as His being fitted thereby for completing His work of manifesting the Father. There are three main points in these verses—the petition, its purpose, and its grounds.

As to the first, the repetition of the request in verses 1 and 5 is significant, especially if we note that in the former the language is impersonal, 'Thy Son,' and continues so till verse 4, where 'I' and 'Me' appear. In verses 1-3, then, the prayer rests upon the ideal relations of Father and Son, realised in Jesus, while in verses 4 and 5 the personal element is emphatically presented. The two petitions are in their scope identical. The 'glorifying' in the former is more

fully explained in the latter as being that which He possessed in that ineffable fellowship with the Father, not merely before incarnation, but before creation. In His manhood He possessed and manifested the 'glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'; but that glory, lustrous though it was, was pale, and humiliation compared with the light inaccessible, which shone around the Eternal Word in the bosom of the Father. Yet He who prayed was the same Person who had walked in that light before time was, and now in human flesh asked for what no mere manhood could bear. The first form of the petition implies that such a partaking in the uncreated glory of the Father is the natural prerogative of One who is 'the Son,' while the second implies that it is the appropriate recompense of the earthly life and character of the man Jesus.

The petition not only reveals the conscious divinity of the Son, but also His willing acceptance of the Cross; for the glorifying sought is that reached through death, resurrection, and ascension, and that introductory clause, 'the hour is come,' points to the impending sufferings as the first step in the answer to the petition. The Crucifixion is always thus treated in this Gospel, as being both the lowest humiliation and the 'lifting up' of the Son; and here He is reaching out His hand, as it were, to draw His sufferings nearer. So willingly and desiringly did this Isaac climb the mount of sacrifice. Both elements of the great saying in the Epistle to the Hebrews are here: 'For the joy that was set before Him, [He] endured the Cross.'

The purpose of the petition is to be noted; namely, the Son's glorifying of the Father. No taint of selfishness corrupted His prayer. Not for Himself, but for

men, did He desire His glory. He sought return to that serene and lofty seat, and the elevation of His limited manhood to the throne, not because He was wearied of earth or impatient of weakness, sorrows, or limitations, but that He might more fully manifest by that Glory, the Father's name. To make the Father known is to make the Father glorious; for He is all fair and lovely. That revelation of divine perfection, majesty, and sweetness was the end of Christ's earthly life, and is the end of His heavenly divine activity. He needs to reassume the prerogatives of which He needed to divest Himself, and both necessities have one end. He had to lay aside His garments and assume the form of a servant, that He might make God known; but, that revelation being complete, He must take His garments and sit down again, before He can go on to tell all the meaning of what He has 'done unto us.'

The ground of the petition is twofold. Verses 2 and 3 represent the glory sought for, as the completion of the Son's mission and task. Already He had been endowed with 'authority over all flesh,' for the purpose of bestowing eternal life; and that eternal life stands in the knowledge of God, which is the same as the knowledge of Christ. The present gift to the Son and its purpose are thus precisely parallel with the further gift desired, and that is the necessary carrying out of this. The authority and office of the incarnate Christ demand the glory of, and consequent further manifestation by, the glorified Christ. The life which He comes to give is a life which flows from the revelation that He makes of the Father, received, not as mere intellectual knowledge, but as loving acquaintance.

The second ground for the petition is in verse 4, the actual perfect fulfilment by the Son of that mission.

What untroubled consciousness of sinless obedience and transparent shining through His life of the Father's likeness and will He must have had, who could thus assert His complete realisation of that Father's revealing purpose, as the ground of His deserving and desiring participation in the divine glory! Surely such words are either the acme of self-righteousness or the self-revealing speech of the Son of God.

II. With verse 6 we pass to the more immediate reference to the disciples, and the context from thence to verse 15 may be regarded as all clustered round the second petition 'keep' (v. 11). That central request is preceded and followed by considerations of the disciples' relation to Christ and to the world, which may be regarded as its grounds. The whole context preceding the petition may be summed up in two grounds for the prayer—the former set forth at length, and the latter summarily; the one being the genuine, though incomplete discipleship of the men for whom Christ prays (vs. 6-10), and the latter their desolate condition without Jesus (v. 11).

It is beautiful to see how our Lord here credits the disciples with genuine grasp, both in heart and head, of His teaching. He had shortly before had to say, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?' and soon 'they all forsook Him and fled.' But beneath misconception and inadequate apprehension there lived faith and love; and He saw 'the full corn in the ear,' when only the green 'blade' was visible, pushing itself above the surface. We may take comfort from this generous estimate of imperfect disciples. If He did not tend, instead of quenching, 'dimly burning tapers,' where would He have 'lights in the world?'

Verse 6 lays down the beginning of discipleship as

threefold: Christ's act in revealing; the Father's, in giving men to Jesus; and men's, in keeping the Father's word. 'Thy word' is the whole revelation by Christ, which is, as this Gospel so often repeats, not His own, but the Father's. These three facts underlying discipleship are pleas for the petition to follow; for unless the feeble disciples are 'kept' in the name, as in a fortress, Christ's work of revelation is neutralised, the Father's gift to Him made of none effect, and the incipient disciples will not 'keep' His word. The plea is, in effect, 'Forsake not the works of thine own hands'; and, like all Christ's prayers, it has a promise in its depths, since God does not begin what He will not finish; and it has a warning, too, that we cannot keep ourselves unless a stronger Hand keeps us.

Verses 7 and 8 carry on the portraiture of discipleship, and thence draw fresh pleas. The blessed result of accepting Christ's revelation is a knowledge, built on happy experience, and, like the acquaintance of heart with heart, issuing in the firm conviction that Christ's words and deeds are from God. Why does He say, 'All things whatsoever Thou hast given,' instead of simply 'that I have' or 'declare'? Probably it is the natural expression of His consciousness, the lowly utterance of His obedience, claiming nothing as His own, and yet claiming all, while the subsequent clause 'are of Thee' expresses the disciples' conviction. In like fashion our Lord, in verse 8, declares that His words, in their manifoldness (contrast v. 6, 'Thy word'), were all received by Him from the Father, and accepted by the disciples, with the result that they came, as before, to 'know' by inward acquaintance with Him as a person, and so to have the divinity of His Person certified by experience, and further came to 'believe

that God had sent Him, which was a conviction arrived at by faith. So knowledge, which is personal experience and acquaintance, and faith, which rises to the heights of the Father's purpose, come from the humble acceptance of the Christ declaring the Father's name. First faith, then knowledge, and then a fuller faith built on it, and that faith in its turn passing into knowledge (v. 25)—these are the blessings belonging to the growth of true discipleship, and are discerned by the loving eye of Jesus in very imperfect followers.

In verse 9 Jesus assumes the great office of Intercessor. 'I pray for them' is not so much prayer as His solemn presentation of Himself before the Father as the High-priest of His people. It marks an epoch in His work. The task of bringing God to man is substantially complete. That of bringing men by supplication to God is now to begin. It is the revelation of the permanent office of the departed Lord. Moses on the Mount holds up the rod, and Israel prevails (Exod. xvii. 9). The limitation of this prayer to the disciples applies only to the special occasion, and has no bearing on the sweep of His redeeming purpose or the desires of His all-pitying heart. The reasons for His intercession follow in verses 9-11a. The disciples are the Father's, and continue so even when 'given' to Christ, in accordance with the community of possession, which oneness of nature and perfectness of love establish between the Father and the Son. God cannot but care for those who are His. The Son cannot but pray for those who are His. Their having recognised Him for what He was binds Him to pray for them. He is glorified in disciples, and if we show forth His character, He will be our Advocate. The last reason for His prayer is the loneliness of the disciples and their exposure in the

world without Him. His departure impelled Him to intercede, both as being a leaving them defenceless and as being an entrance into the heavenly state of communion with the Father.

In the petition itself (v. 11b), observe the invocation 'Holy Father!' with special reference to the prayer for preservation from the corruption of the world. God's holiness is the pledge that He will make us holy, since He is 'Father' as well. Observe the substance of the request, that the disciples should be kept, as in a fortress, within the enclosing circle of the name which God has given to Jesus. The name is the manifestation of the divine nature. It was given to Jesus, inasmuch as He, 'the Word,' had from the beginning the office of revealing God; and that which was spoken of the Angel of the Covenant is true in highest reality of Jesus: 'My name is in Him.' 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe.'

Observe the issue of this keeping; namely, the unity of believers. The depths of that saying are beyond us, but we can at least see thus far—that the true bond of unity is the name in which all who are one are kept: that the pattern of the true unity of believers is the ineffable union of Father and Son, which is oneness of will and nature, along with distinctness of persons; and that therefore this purpose goes far deeper than outward unity of organisation.

Then follow other pleas, which are principally drawn from Christ's relation to the disciples, now ending; whereas the former ones were chiefly deduced from the disciples' relation to Him. He can no more do what He has done, and commits it to the Father. Happy we if we can leave our unfinished tasks to be taken up by God, and trust those whom we leave undefended to be

shielded by Him! 'I kept' is, in the Greek, expressive of continuous, repeated action, while 'I guarded' gives the single issue of the many acts of keeping. Jesus keeps His disciples now as He did then, by sedulous, patient, reiterated acts, so that they are safe from evil. But note where He kept them—'in Thy name.' That is our place of safety, a sure defence and inexpugnable fortress. One, indeed, was lost; but that was not any slur on Christ's keeping, but resulted from his own evil nature, as being 'a son of loss' (if we may so preserve the affinity of the words in the Greek), and from the divine decree from of old. Sharply defined and closely united are the two apparent contradictories of man's free choice of destruction and God's foreknowledge. Christ saw them in harmony, and we shall do so one day.

Then the flow of the prayer recurs to former thoughts. Going away so soon, He yearned to leave them sharers of His own emotions in the prospect of His departure to the Father, and therefore He had admitted them (and us) to hear this sacred outpouring of His desires. If we laid to heart the blessed revelations of this disclosure of Christ's heart, and followed Him with faithful gaze as He ascends to the Father, and realised our share in that triumph, our empty vessels would be filled by some of that same joy which was His. Earthly joy can never be full; Christian joy should never be anything less than full.

Then follows a final glance at the disciples' relation to the world, to which they are alien because they are of kindred to Him. This is the ground for the repetition of the prayer 'keep,' with the difference that formerly it was 'keep in Thy name,' and now it is 'from the evil.' It is good to gaze first on our defence, the 'munitions of rocks' where we lie safely, and then we

can venture to face the thought of 'the evil,' from which that keeps us, whether it be personal or abstract.

III. Verses 16-19 give the final petition for the immediate circle of disciples, with its grounds. The position of alienation from the world, in which the disciples stand by reason of their assimilation to Jesus, is repeated here. It was the reason for the former prayer, 'keep'; it is the reason for the new petition, 'sanctify.' Keeping comes first, and then sanctifying, or consecration. Security from evil is given that we may be wholly devoted to the service of God. The evil in the world is the great hindrance to that. The likeness to Jesus is the great ground of hope that we shall be truly consecrated. We are kept 'in the name'; we are consecrated 'in the truth,' which is the revelation made by Jesus, and in a very deep sense is Himself. That truth is, as it were, the element in which the believer lives, and by abiding in which his real consecration is possible.

Christ's prayer for us should be our aim and deepest desire for ourselves, and His declaration of the condition of its fulfilment should prescribe our firm adhesion to, and constant abiding in, the truth as revealed and embodied in Him, as the only means by which we can attain the consecration which is at once, as the closing verses of the passage tell us, the means by which we may fulfil the purpose for which we are sent into the world, and the path on which we reach complete assimilation to His perfect self-surrender. All Christians are sent into the world by Jesus, as Jesus was sent by the Father. We have the charge to glorify Him. We have the presence of the Sender with us, the sent. We are inspired with His Spirit. We cannot do His work without that entire consecra-

tion which shall copy His devotion to the Father and eager swiftness to do His will. How can such ennobling and exalted consecration be ours? There is but one way. He has 'consecrated Himself,' and by union with Him through faith, our selfishness may be subdued, and the Spirit of Christ may dwell in our hearts, to make us 'living sacrifices, consecrated and acceptable to God.' Then shall we be truly 'consecrated,' and then only, when we can say, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' That is the end of Christ's consecration of Himself—the prayer which He prayed for His disciples—and should be the aim which every disciple earnestly pursues.

'THE LORD THEE KEEPS'

'... They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.'
—JOHN xvii. 14-16.

WE have here a petition imbedded in a reiterated statement of the disciples' isolated position when left in a hostile world without Christ's sheltering presence. We cannot fathom the depth of the mystery of the *praying* Christ, but we may be sure of this, that His prayers were always in harmony with the Father's will, were, in fact, the expression of that will, and were therefore promises and prophecies. What He prays the Father for His disciples He gives to His disciples. Once only had He to say, 'If it be possible'; at all other times He prayed as sure that 'Thou hearest Me always,' and in this very prayer He speaks in a tone of strange authority, when He prays for all believers in future ages, and says: 'I will that, where I am, they also may

be with Me.' In this High-priestly prayer, offered when Gethsemane was almost in sight, and the Judgment Hall and Calvary were near, our Lord's tender interest in His disciples fills His mind, and even in its earlier portion, which is in form a series of petitions for Himself, it is in essence a prayer for them, whilst this central section which concerns the Apostles, and the closing section which casts the mantle of His love and care over all who hereafter shall 'believe on Me through their word,' witnesses to the sublime completeness of His self-oblivion. Gethsemane heard His prayer for Himself; here He prays for His people and the calm serenity and confident assurance of this prayer, set against the agitation of that other, receives and gives emphasis by the contrast.

Our text falls into two parts, the enclosing circle of the repeated statement of the disciples' isolation in an alien world, and the enclosed jewel of the all-sufficient prayer which guarantees their protection. We shall best make its comfort and cheer our own by dealing with these two successively.

I. The disciples' isolation.

Of course we are to interpret the 'world' here in accordance with the ethical usage of that term in this Gospel, according to which it means the aggregate of mankind considered as apart from and alien to God. It is roughly equivalent to the modern phrase, 'society.'

With that order of things Christ's real followers are not in accord.

That want of accord depends upon their accord with Jesus.

Every Christian has the 'mind of Christ' in him, in the measure of his Christianity. 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.' But Chris-

tian discipleship has a better guarantee for the assimilation of the disciple to his Lord than the ordinary forms of the relation of teacher and taught ever present. There is a participation in the Master's life, an implantation in the scholar's spirit of the Teacher's Spirit. 'Christ in us' is not only 'the hope of glory,' but the power which makes possible and actual the present possession of a life kindred with, because derived from, and essentially one with, His life.

They whose spirits are touched by the indwelling Christ to the 'fine issues' of sympathy with the law of His earthly life cannot but live in the world as aliens, and wander amid its pitfalls with 'blank misgivings' and a chill sense that this is not their rest. They are knit to One whose 'meat and drink' was to do the will of the Father in heaven, who 'pleased not Himself,' whose life was all one long service and sacrifice for men, whose joys were not fed by earthly possessions or delights. How should they have a sense of community of aims with grovelling hearts that cling to wealth or ambition, that are not at peace with God, and have no holdfasts beyond this 'bank and shoal of time'? A man who has drunk into the spirit of Christ's life is thereby necessarily thrown out of gear with the world.

Happy is he if his union with Jesus is so deep and close that it is but deepened by his experience of the lack of sympathy between the world and himself! Happy if his consciousness of not being 'of the world' but quickens his desire to help the world and glorify his Lord, by bringing His all-sufficiency into its emptiness, and leading it, too, to discern His sweetness and beauty!

But how little the life of the average Christian cor-

responds to this reiterated utterance of our Lord! Who of us dare venture to take it on our lips and to say that we are 'not of the world even as He is not of the world'? Is not our relation to that world of which Jesus here speaks a contrast rather than a parallel to His? The 'prince of this world' had nothing in Christ, as He himself declared, but He has much in each of us. There are stored up heaps of combustibles in every one of us which catch fire only too swiftly, and burn but too fiercely, when the 'fiery darts of the wicked' fall among them. Instead of an instinctive recoil from the view of life characteristic of 'the world,' we must confess, if we are honest, that it draws us strongly, and many of us are quite at home with it. Why is this but because we do not habitually live near enough to our Lord to drink in His Spirit? The measure of our discord with the world is the measure of our accord with our Saviour. It is in the degree in which we possess His life that we come to be aliens here, and it is in the degree in which we keep in touch with Jesus, and keep our hearts wide open for the entrance of His Spirit, that we possess His life. A worldly Christian—no uncommon character—is a Christian who has all but shut himself off from the life which Christ breathes into the expectant soul.

II. The disciples' guarded security.

Jesus encloses His prayer between the two parts of that repeated statement of the disciples' isolation. It is like some lovely, peaceful plain circled by grim mountains. The isolation is a necessary consequence of the disciples' previous union with Him. It involves much that is painful to the unrenewed part of their natures, but their Lord's prayer is more than enough for their security and peace.

'I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world.' They are in it by God's appointment for great purposes, affecting their own characters and affecting the world, with which Christ will not interfere. It is their training ground, their school. The sense of belonging to another order is to be intensified by their experiences in it, and these are to make more vivid the hopes that yearn towards the true home, and to develop the 'wrestling thews that throw the world.' The discipline of life is too precious to be tampered with even by a Saviour's prayer, and He loves His people too wisely to seek to shelter them from its roughness, and to procure for them exemption which would impoverish their characters.

So let us learn the lesson and shape our desires after the pattern of our Lord's prayer for us, nor blindly seek for that ease which He would not ask for us. False asceticism that shrinks from contact with an alien world, weak running from trials and temptations, selfish desires for exemption from sorrows, are all rebuked by this prayer. Christ's relation to the world is our pattern, and we are not to seek for pillows in an order of things where He 'had not where to lay His head.'

But He does ask for His people that they may be kept 'from evil,' or from 'the evil One.' That prayer is, as we have said, a promise and a prophecy. But the fulfilment of it in each individual disciple hinges on the disciple's keeping himself in touch with Jesus, whereby the 'much virtue' of His prayer will encompass him and keep him safe. We do not discuss the alternative renderings, according to one of which 'the evil' is impersonal, and according to the other of which it is concentrated in the personal 'prince of this world

In either case, it is 'the evil' against which the disciples are to be guarded, whether it has a personal source or not.

Here, in Christ's intercession, is the firm ground of our confidence that we may be 'more than conquerors' in the life-long fight which we have to wage. The sweet strong old psalm is valid in its assurances to-day for every soul which puts itself under the shadow of Christ's protecting intercession: 'The Lord shall keep thee from all evil, He shall keep thy soul.' We have not 'to lift up our eyes unto the hills,' for 'vainly is help hoped for from the multitude of the mountains,' but 'Our help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.' Therefore we may dwell at peace in the midst of an alien world, having the Father for our Keeper, and the Son, who overcame the world, for our Intercessor, our Pattern and our Hope.

The parallel between Christ and His people applies to their relations to the present order of things: 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.' It applies to their mission here: 'As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so sent I them into the world.' It applies to the future: 'I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee,' and in that 'coming' lies the guarantee that His servants will, each in his due time, come out from this alien world and pass into the state which is home, because He is there. The prayer that they might be kept from the evil, while remaining in the scene where evil is rampant, is crowned by the prayer: 'I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me, that they may behold My glory.'

THE HIGH PRIEST'S PRAYER

'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me, through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou givest Me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.'—JOHN xvii. 20-28.

THE remainder of this prayer reaches out to all generations of believers to the end. We may incidentally note that it shows that Jesus did not anticipate a speedy end of the history of the world or the Church; and also that it breathes but one desire, that for the Church's unity, as though He saw what would be its greatest peril. Characteristic, too, of the idealism of this Gospel is it that there is no name for that future community. It is not called 'church,' or 'congregation,' or the like—it is 'them also that believe on Me through their word,' a great spiritual community, held together by common faith in Him whom the Apostles preached. Is not that still the best definition of Christians, and does not such a conception of it correspond better to its true nature than the formal abstraction, 'the Church'?

We can but touch in the most inadequate fashion the profound words of this section of the prayer which would take volumes to expound fitly. We note that it contains four periods, in each of which something is asked or stated, and then a purpose to be attained by the petition or statement is set forth.

First comes the prayer for unity and what the

answer to it will effect (v. 21). Now in this verse the unity of believers is principally regarded as resulting from the inclusion, if we may so say, of them all in the ineffable union of the Father and the Son. Jesus prays that 'they may all be one,' and also 'that they also may be in us' (Rev. Ver.). And their unity is no mere matter of formal external organisation nor of unanimity of creed, or the like, but it is a deep, vital unity. The pattern of it is the unity of the Father and the Son, and the power that brings it about is the abiding of all believers 'in us.' The result of such a manifestation in the world of a multitude of men, in all of whom one life evidently moves, fusing their individualities while retaining their personalities, will be the world's conviction of the divine mission of Jesus. The world was beginning to feel its convictions moving slowly in that direction, when it exclaimed: 'Behold how these Christians love one another!' The alienation of Christians has given barbs and feathers to its arrows of scorn. But it is 'the unity of the Spirit,' not that of a great corporation, that Christ's prayer desires.

The petitions for what would be given to believers passes for a moment into a statement of what Jesus had already given to them. He had begun the unifying gift, and that made a plea for its perfecting. The 'glory' which He had given to these poor bewildered Galilæans was but in a rudimentary stage; but still, wherever there is faith in Him, there is some communication of His life and Spirit, and some of that veiled and yet radiant glory, 'full of grace and truth,' which shone through the covering when the Incarnate Word 'became flesh.' It is the Christ-given Christ-likeness in each which knits believers into one. It is Christ in

us and we in Christ that fuses us into one, and thereby makes each perfect. And such flashing back of the light of Jesus from a million separate crystals, all glowing with one light and made one in the light, would flash on darkest eyes the lustre of the conviction that God sent Christ, and that God's love enfolded those Christlike souls even as it enfolded Him.

Again (v. 24) comes a petition with its result. And here there is no mention of the effect of the answer on the world. For the moment the thoughts of isolation in, and a message to, the world fade away. The partially-possessed 'glory' seems to have led on Christ's thoughts to the calm home of perfection waiting for Him who was 'not of the world' and was sent into it, and for the humble ones who had taken Him for Lord. 'I will that'—that is a strange tone for a prayer. What consciousness on Christ's part does it involve? The disciples are not now called 'them that should believe on Me,' but 'that which Thou hast given Me,' the individuals melt into the great whole. They are Christ's, not merely by their faith or man's preaching, but by the Father's gift. And the fact of that gift is used as a plea with Him, to 'perfect that which concerneth' them, and to complete the unity of believers with Jesus by bringing them to be 'with Him' in His triumphant session at the right hand. To 'behold' will be the same as to share His glory, not only that which we beheld when He tabernacled among us, but that which He had in the pouring out on Him of God's love 'before the foundation of the world.' Our dim eyes cannot follow the happy souls as they are lost in the blaze, but we know that they walk in light and are like Him, for they 'see Him as He is.'

The last statement (vs. 25, 26) is not petition but vow.

and, to our ears, promise. The contrast of the world and believers appears for the last time. What made the world a 'world' was its not knowing God; what made believers isolated in, and having an errand to, the world, was that they 'knew' (not merely 'believed,' but knew by experience) that Jesus had been sent from God to make known His name. All our knowledge of God comes through Him; it is for us to recognise His divine mission, and then He will unveil, more and more, with blessed continuity of increasing knowledge, the Name, and with growing knowledge of it growing measures of God's love will be in us, and Jesus Himself will 'dwell in our hearts by faith' more completely and more blessedly through an eternity of wider knowledge and more fervent love.

THE FOLDED FLOCK

'I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.'—JOHN xvii. 24.

THIS wonderful prayer is (a) for Jesus Himself, (b) for the Apostles, (c) for the whole Church on earth and in heaven.

I. The prayer.

'I will' has a strange ring of authority. It is the expression of His love to men, and of His longing for their presence with Him in His glory. Not till they are with Him there, shall He 'see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.'

We have here a glimpse of the blessed state of the dead in Christ.

(a) Local presence with Christ. His glorified body is somewhere. The value of this thought is that it gives

solidity to our ideas of a future life. There they are. We need not dwell on the metaphysical difficulties about locality for disembodied spirits.

If a spirit can be localised in a body, I suppose it can be localised without a body; but passing by all that, we have the hope held out here of a real local presence with the glorified humanity of our Lord. We speak of the dead as gone *from us*, and we have that idea far more vividly in our minds than that of their having gone *to Him*. We speak of the 'departed,' but we do not think of them as 'arrived.' We look down to the narrow grave, but we forget 'He is not here, He is risen. Why seek ye the living among the dead?' Ah! if we could only bring home to our hearts the solid prose of the conviction that where Christ is there His servants are, and that not in the diffused ubiquity of His Divine Omnipresence, it would go far to remove the darkness and vague mist which wrap the future, and to set it as it really is before us, as a solid definite reality. We see the sails glide away out into the west as the sun goes down, and we think of them as tossing on a midnight sea, an unfathomable waste. Try to think of them more truly. As in that old miracle, He comes to them walking on the water in the night watch, and if at first they are terrified, His voice brings back hope to the heart that is beginning to stand still, and immediately they are at the land whither they go. Now, as they sink from our sight, they are in port, sails furled and anchor dropped, and green fields round them, even while we watch the sinking masts, and cannot yet rightly tell whether the fading sail has faded wholly.

(b) Communion with Christ.

Our Lord says not only 'that where I am, they also may be,' but adds 'with Me.' That is not a superfluous

addition, but emphasises the thought of a communion which is more intimate and blessed than local presence alone would be.

The communion here is real but imperfect. It is perfected there on our part by the dropping away of flesh and sin, by change of circumstances, by emancipation from cares and toils necessary here, by the development of new powers and surroundings, and on His side by new manifestations.

(c) Vision of His glory.

The crown of this utterance of Christ's will is 'that they may behold My glory.' In an earlier part of this prayer our Lord had spoken of the 'glory which I had with Thee before the world was.' But probably the glory 'given' is not that of essential Divinity, but that of His mediatorial work. To His people 'with Him where He is,' are imparted fuller views of Christ as Saviour, deeper notions of His work, clearer perception of His rule in providence and nature. This is the loftiest employment of the spirits who are perfected and lapped in 'pleasures for evermore' by their union with the glorified Jesus.

Surely this is grander than all metaphorical pictures of heaven.

II. The incipient fulfilment now going on.

The prayer has been in process of fulfilment ever since. The dead in Christ have entered on its answer now.

We need not discuss difficulties about the 'intermediate state,' for this at all events is true, that to be 'absent from the body' is to be 'present with the Lord.'

A Christian death is an answer to this prayer. True, for Christians as for all, the physical necessity is an

imperative law. True, the punitive aspect of death is retained for them. But yet the law is wielded by Christ, and while death remains, its whole aspect is changed. So we may think of those who have departed in His faith and fear as gone in answer to this prayer.

How beautiful that is! Slowly, one by one, they are gathered in, as the stars one by one light up. Place after place is filled.

Thus through the ages the prayer works on, and our dear ones have gone from us, but they have gone to Him. We weep, but they rejoice. To us their departure is the result of an iron law, of a penal necessity, of some secondary cause; but to them it is seen to be the answer to His mighty prayer. They hear His voice and follow Him when He says, 'Come up hither.'

III. The final fulfilment still future.

The prayer looks forward to a perfect fulfilment. His prayer cannot be vain.

(a) Perfect in degree.

(b) Perfect in extent, when all shall be gathered together and the 'whole family' shall be 'in heaven,' and Christ's own word receives its crowning realisation, that 'of all whom the Father hath given Him He has lost nothing.'

And these are not some handful picked out by a decree which we can neither fathom nor alter, but Christ is given to us all, and if we choose to take Him, then for us He has ascended; and as we watch Him going up the voice comes to us: 'I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.'

CHRIST'S SUMMARY OF HIS WORK

'I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love where with Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.'—JOHN xvii. 26.

THIS is the solemn and calm close of Christ's great High-priestly prayer; the very last words that He spoke before Gethsemane and His passion. In it He sums up both the purpose of His life and the petitions of His prayer, and presents the perfect fulfilment of the former as the ground on which He asks the fulfilment of the latter. There is a singular correspondence and contrast between these last words to God and the last words to the disciples, which immediately preceded them. These were, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' In both He sums up His life, in both He is unconscious of flaw, imperfection, or limitation; in both He shares His own possessions among His followers. But His words to men carry a trace of His own conflict and a foreboding of theirs. For His life had been, and for them it was to be, tribulation and a battle, and the highest thing that He could promise them was victory won by conflict. But from the serene elevation of the prayer all such thoughts disappear. Unbroken calm lies over it. His life has been one continual manifestation of the name of God; and the portion that He promises to His followers is not victory won by strife, but the participation with Himself in the love of God.

Both views are true—true to His experience, true to ours. The difference between them lies in the eleva-

tion of the beholder's eye. Looked at on the outward side, His life and ours must be always a battle and often a sorrow. Looked at from within, His life was an unbroken abiding in the love of God, and a continual impartation of the name of God, and our lives may be an ever growing knowledge of God, leading to and being a fuller and fuller possession of His love, and of a present Christ. So let us ponder these deep words: our Lord's own summing up of His work and aims; His statement of what we may hope to attain; and the path by which we may attain it. I shall best bring out the whole fullness of their meaning if I simply follow them word by word.

I. Note, first, the backward look of the revealing Son.

'I have declared Thy name.'

The first thing that strikes one about these words is their boldness. Remember that they are spoken to God, at the close of a life the heights and depths of which they sum up. They are an appeal to God's righteous judgment of the whole character of the career. Do they breathe the tone that we might expect? Surely the prophet or teacher who has most earnestly tried to make himself a mirror, without spot to darken and without dint to distort the divine ray, will be the first to feel, as he looks back, the imperfections of his repetition of his message. But Jesus Christ, when He looks back over His life, has no flaw, limitation, incompleteness, to record or to confess. As always so here, He is absolutely unconscious of anything in the nature of weakness, error, or sin. As when He looked back upon His life as a conflict, He had no defeats to remember with shame, so here, when He looks upon it as the revelation of God He feels that

everything which He has received of the Father He has made known unto men.

And the strange thing is that we admit the claim, and have become so accustomed to regard it as being perfectly legitimate that we forget how enormous it is. He takes an attitude here which in any other man would be repulsive, but in Him is supremely natural. We criticise other people, we outgrow their teachings, we see where their doctrines have deviated from truth by excess or defect, or disproportion; but when He says 'I have declared Thy name,' we feel that He says nothing more than the simple facts of His life vindicate and confirm.

Not less remarkable is the implication in these words, not only of the completeness of His message, but of the fullness of His knowledge of God, and its entirely underived nature. So He claims for Himself an altogether special and unique position here: He has learned God from none; He teaches God to all. 'That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'

Looking a little more closely at these words before us, we have here Christ's own account of His whole life. The meaning of it all is the revelation of the heart of God. Not by words, of course; not by words only, but far more by deeds. And I would have you ask yourselves this question—If the deeds of a man are a declaration of the name of God, what sort of a man is He who thus declares Him? Must we not feel that if these words, or anything like them, really came from the lips of Jesus Christ, we are here in the presence of something other than a holy life of a simple humanity, which might help men to climb to the apprehension of a God who was perfect love; and that when He says

'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,' we stand before 'God manifest in the flesh.'

What is that name of God which the revealing Son declares? Not the mere syllables by which we call Him, but the manifested character of the Father. That one name, in the narrower sense of the word, carries the whole revelation that Jesus Christ has to make; for it speaks of tenderness, of kindred, of paternal care, of the transmission of a nature, of the embrace of a divine love. And it delivers men from all their creeping dreads, from all their dark peradventures, from all their stinging fears, from all the paralysing uncertainties which, like clouds, always misty and often thunder-bearing, have shut out the sight of the divine face. If this Christ, in His weakness and humanity, with pity welling from His eyes, and making music of His voice, with the swift help streaming from His finger-tips to every pain and weariness, and the gracious righteousness that drew little children and did not repel publicans and harlots, is our best image of God, then love is the centre of divinity, and all the rest that we call God is but circumference and fringe of that central brightness.

'So through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, "O heart I made! a heart beats here,"'

He has declared God's name, His last best name of Love.

Need I dwell for one moment on the fact that that name is only declared by this Son? There is no need to deny the presence of manifold other precious sources in men's experience and lives from which something

may be inferred of what God truly is. But all these, rich and manifold as they are, fall into nothingness before the life of Jesus Christ, considered as the making visible of God. For all the rest are partial and incomplete. 'At sundry times and in divers manners' God flung forth syllables of the name, and 'fragments of that mighty voice came rolling down the wind.' But in Jesus Christ the whole name, in all its syllables, is spoken. Other sources of knowledge are ambiguous, and need the interpretation of Christ's life and Cross ere they can be construed into a harmonious whole. Life, nature, our inmost being, history, all these sources speak with two voices; and it is only when we hear the deep note that underlies them in the word of Christ that their discord becomes a harmony. Other sources lack authority. They come at the most with a 'may be.' He comes with a 'Verily, verily.' Other sources speak to the understanding, or the conscience, or to fear. Christ speaks to the heart. Other sources leave the man who accepts them unaffected. Christ's message penetrates to the transforming and assimilation of the whole being.

So, dear brethren! for all generations, and for this generation most of all, the plain alternative lies between the declaration of the name of God in Jesus Christ and a godless and orphan world. Modern thought will make short work of all other sources of certitude about the character of God, and will leave men alone in the dark. Christ, the historical fact of the life and death of Jesus Christ, is the sole surviving source of certitude, which is blessedness, as to whether there is a God, and what sort of a God He is.

II. Secondly, note here that strange forward look of

the dying Man: 'I have declared Thy name and *will declare it.*'

And that was said within eight and forty hours of the Cross, which, if He had been a simple human teacher and martyr, would have ended all His activity in the world. But here He is not merely summing up His life, and laying it aside, writing the last sentence, as it were, which gathers up the whole of the completed book, but He is closing the first volume, and in the act of doing so He stretches out His hand to open the second. 'I will declare it.' When? How? Did not earthly life, then, put a stop to this Teacher's activity? Was there still prophetic function to be done after death had sealed His lips? Certainly.

That anticipation, which at once differentiates Him from all the brood of merely human teachers and prophets, even the highest, does indeed include as future, at the moment when He speaks, the swiftly coming and close Cross; but it goes beyond it. How much of Christendom's knowledge of God depended upon the Passion, on the threshold of which Christ was standing? He, hanging on the Cross in weakness, and dying there amidst the darkness that overspread the land, is a strange Revealer of the omnipotent, infinite, ever-blessed God. But Oh! if we strike Gethsemane and Calvary out of Christ's manifestation of the Father, how infinitely poorer are we and the world! 'God commendeth,' (rather 'establisheth,') 'His love toward us in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' And so as we turn ourselves to the little knoll outside the gate, where the Nazarene carpenter hangs faint and dying, we—wonder of wonders, and yet certainty of certainties!—have to say, 'Lo! this is our God; we have waited for Him.'

But that future revelation extends beyond the Cross, and includes resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, and the whole history of the Church right onwards through the ages. The difference between the two volumes of revelation—that which includes the work of Christ upon earth, and that which includes His revelation from the heavens—is this, that the first volume contains all the facts, and the second volume contains His interpretation and application of the facts in the understandings and hearts of His people. We have no more facts from which to construe God than these which belong to the earthly life of Jesus Christ, and we never shall have, here at all events. But whilst the first volume to the bottom of the last page is finished and tolerates and needs no additions, day by day, moment by moment, epoch by epoch Christ is bringing His people to a fuller understanding of the significance of the first volume, and writing the second more and more upon their hearts.

So we have an ever-living Christ, still the active Teacher of His Church. Times of unsettlement and revolutionary change and the ‘shaking of the things that are made,’ like the times in which we live, are but times in which the great Teacher is setting some new lesson from the old Book to His slow scholars. There is always a little confusion in the schoolroom when the classes are being rearranged and new books are being put into old hands. The tributary stream, as it rushes in, makes broken water for a moment. Do not let us be afraid when ‘the things that can be shaken’ shake, but let us see in the shaking the attendant of a new curriculum on which the great Teacher is launching His scholars, and let us learn the new lessons of the old Gospel which He is then teaching.

III. Thirdly, note the participation in the Father's love which is the issue of the knowledge of the Father's name.

Christ says that His end, an end which is surely attained in the declaration of the divine name, is that 'the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them.' We are here touching upon heights too dizzy for free and safe walking, on glories too bright for close and steady gaze. But where Christ has spoken we may reverently follow. Mark, then, that marvellous thought of the identity between the love which was His and the love which is ours. 'From everlasting' that divine love lay on the Eternal Word which in the hoary beginning, before the beginning of creatures, 'was with God, and was God.' The deepest conception that we can form of the divine nature is of a Being who in Himself carries the Subject and the Object of an eternal love, which we speak of in the deep emblem of 'the Word,' and the God with whom He eternally 'was.' That love lay upon Christ, without limitation, without reservation, without interruption, finding nothing there from which it recoiled, and nothing there which did not respond to it. No mist, no thunderstorm, ever broke that sunshine, no tempest ever swept across that calm. Continuous, full, perfect was the love that knit the Father to the Son, and continuous, full, and perfect was the consciousness of abiding in that love, which lay like light upon the spirit of Him that said 'I delight to do Thy will.' 'The Father hath not left Me alone.'

And all that love Christ gives to us as deep, as continuous, as unreserved. Our consciousness of God's love is meant by Christ to be like His own. Alas! alas! is that our experience, Christian people? The

sun always shines on the rainless land of Egypt, except for a month or two in the year. The contrast between the unclouded blue and continuous light and heat there, and our murky skies and humid atmosphere, is like the contrast between our broken and feeble consciousness of the shining of the divine love and the uninterrupted glory of light and joy of communion which poured on Christ's heart. But it is possible for us indefinitely to approximate to such an experience; and the way by which we reach it is that plain and simple one of accepting Christ's declaration of the Father's name.

IV. And so, lastly, notice the indwelling Christ who makes our participation in the divine love possible: 'And I in them.'

One may well say, 'How can it be that love should be transferred? How can it be that the love of God to me shall be identical with the love of God to Christ?' There is only one answer. If Christ dwells in me, then God's love to Him falls upon me by no transference, but by my incorporation into Him. And I would urge that this great truth of the actual indwelling of Christ in the soul is no mere piece of rhetorical exaggeration, nor a wild and enthusiastic way of putting the fact that the influence of His teaching and the beauty of His example can sway us; but it is a plain and absolute truth that the divine Christ can come into and abide in the narrow room of our poor hearts. And if He does this, then 'he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit'; and the Christ in me receives the sunshine of the divine love. That does not destroy, but heightens, my individuality. I am more and not less myself because 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'

So, dear brethren! it all comes to this—we may each

of us, if we will, have Jesus Christ for Guest and Inhabitant in our hearts. If we have, then, since God loves Him, He must love me who have Him within me, and as long as God loves Christ He cannot cease to love me, nor can I cease to be conscious of His love to me, and whatsoever gifts His love bestows upon Jesus, pass over in measure, and partially, to myself. Thus immortality, heaven, glory, all blessedness in heaven and earth, are the fruit and crystallisation, so to speak, of that oneness with Christ which is possible for us. And the conditions are simply that we shall with joyful trust accept His declaration of the Father's name, and see God manifest in Him; and welcome in our inmost hearts that great Gospel. Then His prayer, and the travail of His soul, will reach their end even in me, and 'the love wherewith the Father loved the Son shall be in me,' and the Son Himself shall dwell in my heart.

CHRIST AND HIS CAPTORS

'As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none.'—JOHN xviii. 6-9.

THIS remarkable incident is narrated by John only. It fits in with the purpose which he himself tells us governed his selection of the incidents which he records. 'These things are written,' says he, near the end of the Gospel, 'that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life in His name.' The whole of the peculiarities of the substance of John's Gospel are to be explained on the two grounds that he was writing a supplement to, and not a sub-

stitute for, or a correction of, the Gospels already in existence; and that his special business was to narrate such facts and words as set forth the glory of Christ as *as 'the Only Begotten of the Father.'*

The incident before us is, as I think, one of these. The Evangelist would have us see in it, as I gather from his manner of narrating it, mainly three things. He emphasises that strange recoil of the would-be captors before Christ's majestic, calm 'I am He'; that was a manifestation of Christ's glory. He emphasises our Lord's patient standing there, in the midst of the awe-struck crowd, and even inciting them, as it would seem, to do the work for which they had come out; that was a manifestation of the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings. And He emphasises the self-forgetting care with which at that supreme moment He steps between His faithless, weak friends and danger, with the wonderful words, 'If ye seek Me, let these go their way'; to the Evangelist that little incident is an illustration, on a very low level, and in regard to a comparatively trivial matter, of the very same principle by which salvation from all evil in time and in eternity is guaranteed to all that believe on Him:—

I. First, then, consider this remarkable, momentary manifestation of our Lord's glory.

'I am He!' When the Band were thus doubly assured by the traitor's kiss and by His own confession, why did they not lay hands upon Him? There He stood in the midst of them, alone, defenceless; there was nothing to hinder their binding Him on the spot. Instead of that they recoil, and fall in a huddled heap before Him. Some strange awe and terror, of which they themselves could have given no account, was upon their spirits. How came it about? Many things may have conspired

to produce it. I am by no means anxious to insist that this was a miracle. Things of the same sort, though much less in degree, have been often enough seen; when some innocent and illustrious victim has for a moment paralysed the hands of his would-be captors and made them feel, though it were but transiently, 'how awful goodness is.' There must have been many in that band who had heard Him, though, in the uncertain light of quivering moonbeams and smoking torches, they failed to recognise Him till He spoke. There must have been many more who had heard of Him, and many who suspected that they were about to lay hands on a holy man, perhaps on a prophet. There must have been reluctant tools among the inferiors, and no doubt some among the leaders whose consciences needed but a touch to be roused to action. To all, His calmness and dignity would appeal, and the manifest freedom from fear or desire to flee would tend to deepen the strange thoughts which began to stir in their hearts.

But the impression which the narrative seems intended to leave, appears to me to be of something more than this. It looks as if there were something more than human in Christ's look and tone. It may have been the same in kind as the ascendancy which a pure and calm nature has over rude and inferior ones. It may have been the same in kind as has sometimes made the headsman on the scaffold pause before he struck, and has bowed rude gaolers into converts before some grey-haired saint or virgin martyr; yet the difference is so great in degree as practically to become quite another thing. Though I do not want to insist upon any 'miraculous' explanation of the cause of this incident, yet I would ask, May it not be that here we see, perhaps

apart from Christ's will altogether, rising up for one moment to the surface, the indwelling majesty which was always there?

We do not know the laws that regulated the dwelling of the Godhead, bodily, within that human frame, but we do know that at one other time there came upon His features a transfiguration, and over His very garments a lustre which was not thrown upon them from without, but rose up from within. And I am inclined to think that here, as there, though under such widely different circumstances and to such various issues, there was for a moment a little rending of the veil of His flesh, and an emission of some flash of the brightness that always tabernacled within Him; and that, therefore, just as Isaiah, when He saw the King in His glory, said, 'Woe is me, for I am undone!' and just as Moses could not look upon the Face, but could only see the back parts, so here the one stray beam of manifest divinity that shot through the crevice, as it were, for an instant, was enough to prostrate with a strange awe even those rude and insensitive men. When He had said 'I am He,' there was something that made them feel, 'This is One before whom violence cowers abashed, and in whose presence impurity has to hide its face.' I do not assert that this is the explanation of that panic terror. I only ask, May it not be?

But whatever we may think was the reason, at all events the incident brings out very strikingly the elevation and dignity of Christ, and the powerful impressions made by His personality, even at such a time of humiliation. This Evangelist is always careful to bring out the glory of Christ, especially when that glory lies side by side with His lowliness. The blending of these two is one of the remarkable features in the

New Testament portraiture of Jesus Christ. Wherever in our Lord's life any incident indicates more emphatically than usual the lowliness of His humiliation, there, by the side of it, you get something that indicates the majesty of His glory. For instance, He is born a weak infant, but angels herald His birth; He lies in a manger, but a star hangs trembling above it, and leads sages from afar, with their myrrh, and incense, and gold. He submits Himself to the baptism of repentance, but the heavens open and a voice proclaims, 'This is My beloved Son!' He sits wearied, on the stone coping of the well, and craves for water from a peasant woman; but He gives her the Water of Life. He lies down and sleeps, from pure exhaustion, in the stern of the little fishing-boat, but He wakes to command the storm, and it is still. He weeps beside the grave, but He flings His voice into its inmost recesses, and the sheeted dead comes forth. He well-nigh faints under the agony in the garden, but an angel from Heaven strengthens Him. He stands a prisoner at a human bar, but He judges and condemns His judges. He dies, and that hour of defeat is His hour of triumph, and the union of shame and glory is most conspicuous in that hour when on the Cross the 'Son of Man is *glorified*, and God is glorified in Him.'

This strange blending of opposites—the glory in the lowliness, and the abasement in the glory—is the keynote of this singular event. He will be 'delivered into the hands of men.' Yes; but ere He is delivered He pauses for an instant, and in that instant comes a flash 'above the brightness of the noonday sun' to tell of the hidden glory.

Do not forget that we may well look upon that incident as a prophecy of what shall be. As one of the

suggestive, old commentators on this verse says: 'He will say "I am He," again, a third time. What will He do coming to reign, when He did this coming to die? And what will His manifestation be as a Judge when this was the effect of the manifestation as He went to be judged?' 'Every eye shall see Him'; and they that loved not His appearing shall fall before Him when He cometh to be our Judge; and shall call on the rocks and the hills to cover them.

II. There is here, secondly, a manifestation of the voluntariness of our Lord's suffering.

When that terrified mob recoiled from Him, why did He stand there so patiently? The time was propitious for flight, if He had cared to flee. He might have 'passed through the midst of them and gone His way,' as He did once before, if He had chosen. He comes from the garden; there shall be no difficulty in finding Him. He tells who He is; there shall be no need for the traitor's kiss. He lays them low for a moment, but He will not flee. When Peter draws his sword He rebukes his ill-advised appeal to force, and then He holds out His hands and lets them bind Him. It was not their fetters, but the 'cords of love' which held Him prisoner. It was not their power, but His own pity which drew Him to the judgment hall and the Cross.

Let us dwell upon that thought for a moment. The whole story of the Gospels is constructed upon the principle, and illustrates the fact, that our Lord's life, as our Lord's death, was a voluntary surrender of Himself for man's sin, and that nothing led Him to, and fastened Him on, the Cross but His own will. He willed to be born. He 'came into the world' by His own choice. He 'took upon Him the form of a servant.' He 'took part' of the children's 'flesh and blood.' His

birth was His own act, the first of the long series of the acts, by which for the sake of the love which He bore us, He 'humbled Himself.' Step by step He voluntarily journeyed towards the Cross, which stood clear before Him from the very beginning as the necessary end, made necessary by His love.

As we get nearer and nearer to the close of the history, we see more and more distinctly that He willingly went towards the Cross. Take, for instance, the account of the last portion of our Lord's life, and you see in the whole of it a deliberate intention to precipitate the final conflict. Hence the last journey to Jerusalem when 'His face was set,' and His disciples followed Him amazed. Hence the studied publicity of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Hence the studied, growing severity of His rebukes to the priests and rulers. The same impression is given, though in a somewhat different way, by His momentary retreat from the city and by the precautions taken against premature arrest, that He might not die before the Passover. In both the hastening toward the city and in the retreating from it, there is apparent the same design: that He Himself shall lay down His life, and shall determine the how, and the when, and the where as seems good to Him.

If we look at the act of death itself, Jesus did not die because He must. It was not the nails of the Cross, the physical exhaustion, the nervous shock of crucifixion that killed Him. He died because He would. 'I have power to lay down My life,' He said, 'and I have power'—of course—'to take it again.' At that last moment, He was Lord and Master of death when He bowed His head to death, and, if I might so say, He summoned that grim servant with a 'Comæ!' and he

came, and He set him his task with a 'Do this!' and he did it. He was manifested as the Lord of death, having its 'keys' in His hands, when He died upon the Cross.

Now I pray you to ask yourselves the question, if it be true that Christ died because He would, why was it that He would die? If because He chose, what was it that determined His choice? And there are but two answers, which two are one. The divine motive that ruled His life is doubly expressed: 'I must do the will of My Father,' and 'I must save the world.'

The taunt that those Jewish rulers threw at Him had a deeper truth than they dreamed, and was an encomium, and not a taunt. 'He saved others'—yes, and *therefore*, 'Himself He cannot save.' He cannot, because His choice and will to die are determined by His free love to us and to all the world. His fixed will 'bore His body to the tree,' and His love was the strong spring which kept His will fixed.

You and I have our share in these voluntary sufferings, and our place in that loving heart which underwent them for us. Oh! should not that thought speak to all our hearts, and bind us in grateful service and lifelong surrender to Him who gave Himself for us; and *must* die because He loved us all so much that He *could* not leave us unsaved?

III. We have, lastly, here, a symbol, or, perhaps, more accurately, an instance, on a small scale, of Christ's self-sacrificing care for us.

His words: 'If ye seek Me, let these go their way,' sound more like the command of a prince than the intercession of a prisoner. The calm dignity of them strikes one just as much as the perfect self-forgetfulness of them.

It was a very small matter which He was securing

thereby. The Apostles would have to die for Him some day, but they were not ready for it yet, and so He casts the shield of His protection round them for a moment, and interposes Himself between them and the band of soldiers in order that their weakness may have a little more time to grow strong. And though it was wrong and cowardly for them to forsake Him and flee, yet these words of my text more than half gave them permission and warrant for their departure: 'Let these go their way.'

Now John did not think that this small deliverance was all that Christ meant by these great words: 'Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none!' He saw that it was one case, a very trifling one, a merely transitory one, yet ruled by the same principles which are at work in the immensely higher region to which the words properly refer. Of course they have their proper fulfilment in the spiritual realm, and are not fulfilled, in the highest sense, till all who have loved and followed Christ are presented faultless before the Father in the home above. But the little incident may be a result of the same cause as the final deliverance is. A dew-drop is shaped by the same laws which mould the mightiest of the planets. The old divines used to say that God was greatest in the smallest things, and the self-sacrificing care of Jesus Christ, as He gives Himself a prisoner that His disciples may go free, comes from the same deep heart of pitying love, which led Him to die, the 'just for the unjust.' It may then well stand for a partial fulfilment of His mighty words, even though these wait for their complete accomplishment till the hour when all the sheep are gathered into the one fold, and no evil beasts, nor weary journeys, nor barren pastures can harass them any more.

This trivial incident, then, becomes an exposition of highest truth. Let us learn from such an use of such an event to look upon all common and transitory circumstances as governed by the same loving hands, and working to the same ends, as the most purely spiritual. The visible is the veil which drapes the invisible, and clings so closely to it as to reveal its outline. The common events of life are all parables to the devout heart, which is the wise heart. They speak mystic meanings to ears that can hear. The redeeming love of Jesus is proclaimed by every mercy which perishes in the using; and all things should tell us of His self-forgetting, self-sacrificing care.

Thus, then, we may see in that picture of our Lord's surrendering Himself that His trembling disciples might go free, an emblem of what He does for us, in regard to all our foes. He stands between us and them, receives their arrows into His own bosom, and says, 'Let these go their way.' God's law comes with its terrors, with its penalties, to us who have broken it a thousand times. The consciousness of guilt and sin threatens us all more or less, and with varying intensity in different minds. The weariness of the world, 'the ills that flesh is heir to,' the last grim enemy, Death, and that which lies beyond them all, ring you round. My friends! what are you going to do in order to escape from them? You are a sinful man, you have broken God's law. That law goes on crashing its way and crushing down all that is opposed to it. You have a weary life before you, however joyful it may sometimes be. Cares, and troubles, and sorrows, and tears, and losses, and disappointments, and hard duties that you will not be able to perform, and dark days in which you will be able to see but very little light, are all

certain to come sooner or later; and the last moment will draw near when the King of Terrors will be at your side; and beyond death there is a life of retribution in which men reap the things that they have sown here. All that is true, much of it is true about you at this moment, and it will all be true some day. In view of that, what are you going to do?

I preach to you a Saviour who has endured all for us. As a mother might fling herself out of the sledge that her child might escape the wolves in full chase, here is One that comes and fronts all your foes, and says to them, 'Let these go their way. Take Me.' 'By His stripes we are healed.' 'On Him was laid the iniquity of us all.'

He died because He chose; He chose because He loved. His love had to die in order that His death might be our life, and that in it we should find our forgiveness and peace. He stands between our foes and us. No evil can strike us unless it strike Him first. He takes into His own heart the sharpest of all the darts which can pierce ours. He has borne the guilt and punishment of a world's sin. These solemn penalties have fallen upon Him that we, trusting in Him, 'may go our way,' and that there may be 'no condemnation' to us if we are in Christ Jesus. And if there be no condemnation, we can stand whatever other blows may fall upon us. They are easier to bear, and their whole character is different, when we know that Christ has borne them already. Two of the three whom Christ protected in the garden died a martyr's death; but do you not think that James bowed his neck to Herod's sword, and Peter let them gird him and lead him to his cross, more joyfully and with a different heart, when they thought of Him that 'had

died before them? The darkest prison cell will not be so very dark if we remember that Christ has been there before us, and death itself will be softened into sleep because our Lord has died. 'If therefore,' says He, to the whole pack of evils baying round us, with their cruel eyes and their hungry mouths, 'ye seek Me, let these go their way.' So, brother, if you will fix your trust, as a poor, sinful soul, on that dear Christ, and get behind Him, and put Him between you and your enemies, then, in time and in eternity, that saying will be fulfilled in you which He spake, 'Of them which Thou gavest Me, have I lost none.'

JESUS BEFORE CAIAPHAS

'And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this Man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort: and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest Thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me? Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with Him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.'—JOHN xviii. 15-27.

THE last verses of the preceding passage belong properly to this one, for they tell us that Jesus was 'first' brought before Annas, a fact which we owe to John only. Annas himself and his five sons held the high-priesthood in succession. To the sons has to be added

Caiaphas, who, as we learn from John only, was Annas' son-in-law, and so one of the family party. That Jesus should have been taken to him, though he held no office at the time, shows who pulled the strings in the Sanhedrim. The reference to Caiaphas in verse 14 seems intended to suggest what sort of a trial might be expected, presided over by such a man. But verse 15 tells us that Jesus entered in, accompanied by 'another disciple,' 'to the court,' not, as we should have expected, of Annas, but 'of the high priest,' who, by the testimony of verse 13, can be no one but Caiaphas. How came that about? Apparently, because Annas had apartments in the high-priest's official residence. As he obviously exercised the influence through his sons and son-in-law, who successively held the office, it was very natural that he should be a fixture in the palace.

What John's connection was with this veteran intriguer (assuming that John was that 'other disciple') we do not know. Probably it was some family bond that united two such antipathetic natures. At all events, the Apostle's acquaintance with the judge so far condoned his discipleship to the criminal, that the doors of the audience chamber were open to him, though he was known as 'one of them.'

So he and poor Peter were parted, and the latter left shivering outside in the grey of the morning. John had not missed him at first, for he would be too much absorbed in watching Jesus to have thoughts to spare for Peter, and would conclude that he was following him; but, when he did miss him, like a brave man he ran the risk of being observed, and went for him. The sharp-witted portress, whose business it was to judge applicants for entrance by a quick glance, at once

inferred that Peter 'also' was one of this man's disciples. Her 'also' shows that she knew John to be one; and her 'this man' shows that either she did not know Jesus' name, or thought Him too far beneath her to be named by her! The time during which Peter had been left outside alone, repenting now of, and alarmed for what might happen to him on account of, his ill-aimed blow at Malchus, and feeling the nipping cold, had taken all his courage out of him. The one thing he wished was to slip in unnoticed, and so the first denial came to his lips as rashly as many another word had come in old days. He does not seem to have remained with John, who probably went up to the upper end of the hall, where the examination was going on, while Peter, not having the *entrée* and very much terrified as well as miserable, stayed at the lower end, where the understrappers were making themselves comfortable round a charcoal fire, and paying no attention to the proceedings at the other end. He seemed to be as indifferent as they were, and to be intent only on getting himself warmed. But what surges of emotion would be tossing in his heart, which yet he was trying to hide under the mask of being an unconcerned spectator, like the others!

The examination of our Lord was conducted by 'the high priest,' by which title John must mean Caiaphas, as he has just emphatically noted that he then filled the office. But how is that to be reconciled with the statement that Jesus was taken to Annas? Apparently by supposing that, though Annas was present, Caiaphas was spokesman. But did not a formal trial before Caiaphas follow, and does not John tell us (verse 24) that, after the first examination, Annas sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas? Yes. And are these things com-

patible with this account of an examination conducted by the latter? Yes, if we remember that flagrant wresting of justice marked the whole proceedings. The condemnation of Jesus was a judicial murder, in which the highest court of the Jews 'decreed iniquity by a law'; and it was of a piece with all the rest that he, who was to pose as an impartial judge presently, should, in the spirit of a partisan, conduct this preliminary inquiry. Observe that no sentence was pronounced in the case at this stage. This was not a court at all. What was it? An attempt to entrap the prisoner into admissions which might be used against Him in the court to be held presently. The rulers had Jesus in their hands, and they did not know what to do with Him now that they had Him. They were at a loss to know what His indictment was to be. To kill Him was the only thing on which they had made up their minds; the pretext had yet to be found, and so they tried to get Him to say something which would serve their purpose.

'The high priest therefore asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His teaching'! If they did not know about either, why had they arrested Him? Cunning outwits itself, and falls into the pit it digs for the innocent. Jesus passed by the question as to His disciples unnoticed, and by His calm answer as to His teaching showed that He saw the snare. He reduced Caiaphas and Annas to perpetrating plain injustice, or to letting Him go free. Elementary fair play to a prisoner prescribes that he should be accused of some crime by some one, and not that he should furnish his judges with materials for his own indictment. 'Why askest thou Me? ask them that have heard Me,' is unanswerable, except by such an answer as the officious

'servant' gave—a blow and a violent speech. But Christ's words reach far beyond the momentary purpose; they contain a wide truth. His teaching loves the daylight. There are no muttered oracles, no whispered secrets for the initiated, no double voice, one for the multitude, and another for the adepts. All is above-board, and all is spoken 'openly to the world.' Christianity has no cliques or coteries, nothing sectional, nothing reserved. It is for mankind, for all mankind, all for mankind. True, there are depths in it; true, the secrets which Jesus can only speak to loving ears in secret are His sweetest words, but they are 'spoken in the ear' that they may be 'proclaimed on the housetops.'

The high-priest is silent, for there was nothing that he could say to so undeniable a demand, and he had no witnesses ready. How many since his day have treated Jesus as he treated Him—condemned Him or rejected Him without reason, and then looked about for reasons to justify their attitude, or even sought to make Him condemn Himself!

An unjust judge breeds insolent underlings, and if everything else fails, blows and foul words cover defeat, and treat calm assertion of right as impertinence to high-placed officials. Caiaphas degraded his own dignity more than any words of a prisoner could degrade it.

Our Lord's answer 'reviled not again.' It is meek in majesty and majestic in meekness. Patient endurance is not forbidden to remonstrate with insolent injustice, if only its remonstrance bears no heat of personal anger in it. But Jesus was not so much vindicating His words to Caiaphas in saying, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil,' as reiterating the challenge

for 'witnesses.' He brands the injustice of Caiaphas, while meekly rebuking the brutality of his servant. Master and man were alike in smiting Him for words of which they could not prove the evil.

There was obviously nothing to be gained by further examination. No crime had been alleged, much less established; therefore Jesus ought to have been let go. But Annas treated Him as a criminal, and handed Him over 'bound,' to be formally tried before the man who had just been foiled in his attempt to play the inquisitor. What a hideous mockery of legal procedure! How well the pair, father-in-law and son-in-law, understood each other! What a confession of a foregone conclusion, evidence or no evidence, in shackling Jesus as a malefactor! And it was all done in the name of religion! and perhaps the couple of priests did not know that they were hypocrites, but really thought that they were 'doing God service.'

John's account of Peter's denials rises to a climax of peril and of keenness of suspicion. The unnamed persons who put the second question must have had their suspicions roused by something in his manner as he stood by the glinting fire, perhaps by agitation too great to be concealed. The third question was put by a more dangerous person still, who not only recognised Peter's features as the firelight fitfully showed them, but had a personal ground of hostility in his relationship to Malchus.

John lovingly spares telling of the oaths and curses accompanying the denials, but dares not spare the narration of the fact. It has too precious lessons of humility, of self-distrust, of the possibility of genuine love being overborne by sudden and strong temptation, to be omitted. And the sequel of the denials has yet

more precious teaching, which has brought balm to many a contrite heart, conscious of having been untrue to its deepest love. For the sound of the cock-crow, and the look from the Lord as He was led away bound past the place where Peter stood, brought him back to himself, and brought tears to his eyes, which were sweet as well as bitter. On the resurrection morning the risen Lord sent the message of forgiveness and special love to the broken-hearted Apostle, when He said, 'Go, tell My disciples and Peter,' and on that day there was an interview of which Paul knew (1 Cor. xv. 5), but the details of which were apparently communicated by the Apostle to none of his brethren. The denier who weeps is taken to Christ's heart, and in sacred secrecy has His forgiveness freely given, though, before he can be restored to his public office, he must, by his threefold public avowal of love, efface his threefold denial. We may say, 'Thou knowest that I love thee,' even if we have said, 'I know Him not,' and come nearer to Jesus, by reason of the experience of His pardoning love, than we were before we fell.

ART THOU A KING?

'Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this Man? They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world,

then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.'—JOHN xviii. 28-40.

JOHN evidently intends to supplement the synoptic Gospels' account. He tells of Christ's appearance before Annas, but passes by that before Caiaphas, though he shows his knowledge of it. Similarly he touches lightly on the public hearing before Pilate, but gives us in detail the private conversation in this section, which he alone records. We may suppose that he was present at both the hearing before Annas and the interview within the palace between Jesus and Herod, for he would not be deterred from entering, as the Jews were, and there seems to have been no other impediment in the way. The passage has three stages—the fencing between the Sanhedrists and Pilate, the 'good confession before Pontius Pilate,' and the preference of Barabbas to Jesus.

I. The passage of arms between the priests and the governor. 'It was early,' probably before 6 A.M. A hurried meeting of the Sanhedrim had condemned Jesus to death, and the next thing was to get the Roman authority to carry out the sentence. The necessity of appeal to it was a bitter pill, but it had to be swallowed, for the right of capital punishment had been withdrawn. A 'religious' scruple, too, stood in the way—very characteristic of such formalists. Killing an innocent man would not in the least defile them, or unfit for eating the passover, but to go into a house that had not been purged of 'leaven,' and was further unclean as the residence of a Gentile, though

he was the governor, that would stain their consciences—a singular scale of magnitude, which saw no sin in condemning Jesus, and great sin in going into Pilate's palace! Perhaps some of our conventional sins are of a like sort.

Pilate was, probably, not over-pleased at being roused so early, nor at having to defer to a scruple which would to him look like insolence; and through all his bearing to the Sanhedrim a certain irritation shows itself, which sometimes flashes out in sarcasm, but is for the most part kept down. His first question is, perhaps, not so simple as it looks, for he must have had some previous knowledge of the case, since Roman soldiers had been used for the arrest. But, clearly, those who brought him a prisoner were bound to be the prosecutors.

Whether or not Pilate knew that his question was embarrassing, the rulers felt it so. Why did they not wish to formulate a charge? Partly from pride. They hugged the delusion that their court was competent to condemn, and wanted, as we all often do, to shut their eyes to a plain fact, as if ignoring it annihilated it. Partly because the charge on which they had condemned Jesus—that of blasphemy in calling Himself 'the Son of God'—was not a crime known to Roman law, and to allege it would probably have ended in the whole matter being scornfully dismissed. So they stood on their dignity and tried to bluster. 'We have condemned Him; that is enough. We look to you to carry out the sentence at our bidding.' So the 'ecclesiastical authority' has often said to the 'secular arm' since then, and unfortunately the civil authority has not always been as wise as Pilate was.

He saw an opening to get rid of the whole matter, and with just a faint flavour of irony suggests that, as they have 'a law'—which he, no doubt, thought of as a very barbarous code—they had better go by it, and punish as well as condemn. That sarcastic proposal compelled them to acknowledge their subjection. Pilate had given the reins the least touch, but enough to make them feel the bit; and though it went sore against the grain, they will own their master rather than lose their victim. So their reluctant lips say, 'It is not lawful for us.' Pilate has brought them on their knees at last, and they forget their dignity, and own the truth. Malicious hatred will eat any amount of dirt and humiliation to gain its ends, especially if it calls itself religious zeal.

John sees in the issue of this first round in the duel between Pilate and the rulers the sequence of events which brought about the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction of His crucifixion, since that was not a Jewish mode of execution. This encounter of keen wits becomes tragical and awful when we remember Who it was that these men were wrangling about.

II. We have Jesus and Pilate; the 'good confession,' and the indifferent answer. We must suppose that, unwillingly, the rulers had brought the accusation that Jesus had attempted rebellion against Rome. John omits that, because he takes it for granted that it is known. It is implied in the conversation which now ensued. We must note as remarkable that Pilate does not conduct his first examination in the presence of the rulers, but has Jesus brought to him in the palace. Perhaps he simply wished to annoy the accusers, but more probably his Roman sense of justice combined with his wish to assert his authority, and perhaps with a

suspicion that there was something strange about the whole matter—and not least strange that the Sanhedrim, who were not enthusiastic supporters of Rome, should all at once display such loyalty—to make him wish to have the prisoner by himself, and try to fathom the business. With Roman directness he went straight to the point: ‘Art Thou the King of the Jews, as they have been saying?’ There is emphasis on ‘Thou’—the emphasis which a practical Roman official would be likely to put as he looked at the weak, wearied, evidently poor and helpless man bound before him. There is almost a touch of pity in the question, and certainly the beginning of the conviction that this was not a very formidable rival to Cæsar.

The answer to be given depended on the sense in which Pilate asked the question, to bring out which is the object of Christ’s question in reply. If Pilate was asking of himself, then what he meant by ‘a king’ was one of earth’s monarchs after the emperor’s pattern, and the answer would be ‘No.’ If he was repeating a Jewish charge, then, ‘a king’ might mean the prophetic King of Israel, who was no rival of earthly monarchs, and the answer would be ‘Yes,’ but that ‘Yes’ would give Pilate no more reason to crucify Him than the ‘No’ would have given.

Pilate is getting tired of fencing, and impatiently answers, with true Roman contempt for subject-people’s thoughts as well as their weapons. ‘I . . . a Jew?’ is said with a curl of the firm lips. He points to his informants, ‘Thine own nation and the chief priests,’ and does not say that their surrender of a would-be leader in a war of independence struck him as suspicious. But he brushes aside the cobwebs which he felt were being spun round him, and comes to the point, ‘What

hast Thou done?' He is supremely indifferent to ideas and vagaries of enthusiasts. This poor man before him may call Himself anything He chooses, but *his* only concern is with overt acts. Strange to ask the Prisoner what He had done! It had been well for Pilate if he had held fast by that question, and based his judgment resolutely on its answer! He kept asking it all through the case, he never succeeded in getting an answer; he was convinced that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death, and yet fear, and a wish to curry favour with the rulers, drove him to stain the judge's robe with innocent blood, from which he vainly sought to cleanse his hands.

Our Lord's double answer claims a kingdom, but first shows what it is not, and then what it is. It is 'not of this world,' though it is *in* this world, being established and developed here, but having nothing in common with earthly dominions, nor being advanced by their weapons or methods. Pilate could convince himself that this 'kingdom' bore no menace to Rome, from the fact that no resistance had been offered to Christ's capture. But the principle involved in these great words goes far beyond their immediate application. It forbids Christ's 'servants' to assimilate His kingdom to the world, or to use worldly powers as the means for the kingdom's advancement. The history of the Church has sadly proved how hard it is for Christian men to learn the lesson, and how fatal to the energy and purity of the Church the forgetfulness of it has been. The temptation to such assimilation besets all organised Christianity, and is as strong to-day as when Constantine gave the Church the paralysing gift of 'establishing' it as a kingdom 'of this world.'

Pilate did pick out of this saying an increased

certainty that he had nothing to fear from this strange 'King'; and half-amused contempt for a dreamer, and half-pitying wonder at such lofty claims from such a helpless enthusiast, prompted his question, 'Art Thou a king then?' One can fancy the scornful emphasis on that 'Thou,' and can understand how grotesquely absurd the notion of his prisoner's being a king must have seemed.

Having made clear part of the sense in which the avowal was to be taken, our Lord answered plainly 'Yes.' Thus before the high-priest, He declared Himself to be the Son of God, and before Pilate He claimed to be King, at each tribunal putting forward the claim which each was competent to examine—and, alas! at each meeting similar levity and refusal to inquire seriously into the validity of the claim. The solemn revelation to Pilate of the true nature of His kingdom and of Himself the King fell on careless ears. A deeper mystery than Pilate dreamed of lay beneath the double designation of His origin; for He not only had been 'born' like other men, but had 'come into the world,' having 'come forth from the Father,' and having been before He was born. It was scarcely possible that Pilate should apprehend the meaning of that duplication, but some vague impression of a mysterious personality might reach him, and Jesus would not have fully expressed His own consciousness if He had simply said, 'I was born.' Let us see that we keep firm hold of all which that utterance implies and declares.

The end of the Incarnation is to 'bear witness to the truth.' That witness is the one weapon by which Christ's kingdom is established. That witness is not given by words only, precious as these are, but by deeds which are more than words. These witnessing deeds

are not complete till Calvary and the empty grave and Olivet have witnessed at once to the perfect incarnation of divine love, to the perfect Sacrifice for the world's sin, to the Victor over death, and to the opening of heaven to all believers. Jesus is 'the faithful and true Witness,' as John calls Him, not without reminiscences of this passage, just because He is 'the First-begotten of the dead.' As here He told Pilate that He was a 'king,' because a 'witness,' so John, in the passage referred to, bases His being 'Prince of the kings of the earth' on the same fact.

How little Pilate knew that he was standing at the very crisis of his fate! A yielding to the impression that was slightly touching his heart and conscience, and he, too, might have 'heard' Christ's voice. But he was not 'of the truth,' though he might have been if he had willed, and so the words were wind to him, and he brushed aside all the mist, as he thought it, with the light question, which summed up a Roman man of the world's indifference to ideas, and belief in solid facts like legions and swords. 'What is truth?' may be the cry of a seeking soul, or the sneer of a confirmed sceptic, or the shrug of indifference of the 'practical man.'

It was the last in Pilate's case, as is shown by his not waiting for an answer, but ending the conversation with it as a last shot. It meant, too, that he felt quite certain that this man, with his high-strained, unpractical talk about a kingdom resting on such a filmy nothing, was absolutely harmless. Therefore the only just thing for him to have done was to have gone out to the impatient crowd and said so, and flatly refused to do the dirty work of the priests for them, by killing an innocent man. But he was too cowardly

for that, and, no doubt, thought that the murder of one poor Jew was a small price to pay for popularity with his troublesome subjects. Still, like all weak men, he was not easy in his conscience, and made a futile attempt to get the right thing done, and yet not to suffer for doing it. The rejection of Barabbas is touched very lightly by John, and must be left unnoticed here. The great contribution to our knowledge which John makes is this private interview between the King who reigns by the truth, and the representative of earthly rule, based on arms and worldly forces.

JESUS SENTENCED

'Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote Him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him, and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto Him, Speakest Thou not unto me? knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him; but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away.'—JOHN XIX. 1-16.

THE struggle between the vacillation of Pilate and the fixed malignity of the rulers is the principal theme of this fragment of Christ's judicial trial. He Himself is

passive and all but silent, speaking only one sentence of calm rebuke. The frequent changes of scene from within to without the prætorium indicate the steps in the struggle, and vividly reflect the irresolution of Pilate. These changes may help to mark the stages in the narrative.

I. The cruelties and indignities in verses 1-3 were inflicted within the 'palace,' to which Pilate, with his prisoner, had returned after the popular vote for Barabbas. John makes that choice of the robber the reason for the scourging of Jesus. His thought seems to be that Pilate, having failed in his attempt to get rid of the whole difficulty by releasing Jesus, according to the 'custom,' ordered the scourging, in hope that the lighter punishment might satisfy the turbulent crowd, whom he wished to humour, while, if possible, saving their victim. It was the expedient of a weak and cynical nature, and, like all weak attempts at compromise between right and wrong, only emboldened the hatred which it was meant to appease. If by clamour the rulers had succeeded in getting Pilate to scourge a man whom he thought innocent, they might well hope to get him to crucify, if they clamoured loudly and long enough.

One attitude only befitted Pilate, since he did not in the least believe that Jesus threatened the Roman supremacy; namely, to set Him at liberty, and let the disappointed rulers growl like wild beasts robbed of their prey. But he did not care enough about a single half-crazy Jewish peasant to imperil his standing well with his awkward subjects, for the sake of righteousness. The one good which Rome could give to its vassal nations was inflexible justice and a sovereign law; but in Pilate's action there was not even the pretence of

legality. Tricks and expedients run through it all, and never once does he say, This is the law, this is justice, and by it I stand or fall.

The cruel scourging, which, in Roman hands, was a much more severe punishment than the Jewish 'beating with rods,' and often ended in death, was inflicted on the silent, unresisting Christ, not because His judge thought that it was deserved, but to please accusers whose charge he knew to be absurd. The underlings naturally followed their betters' example, and after they had executed Pilate's orders to scourge, covered the bleeding wounds with some robe, perhaps ragged, but of the royal colour, and crushed the twisted wreath of thorn-branch down on the brows, to make fresh wounds there. The jest of crowning such a poor, helpless creature as Jesus seemed to them, was exactly on the level of such rude natures, and would be the more exquisite to them because it was double-barrelled, and insulted the nation as well as the 'King.' They came in a string, as the tense of the original word suggests, and offered their mock reverence. But that sport became tame after a little, and mockery passed into violence, as it always does in such natures. These rough legionaries were cruel and brutal, and they were unconscious witnesses to His Kingship as founded on suffering; but they were innocent as compared with the polished gentleman on the judgment-seat who prostituted justice, and the learned Pharisees outside who were howling for blood.

II. In verses 4-8 the scene changes again to without the palace, and shows us Pilate trying another expedient, equally in vain. The hesitating governor has no chance with the resolute, rooted hate of the rulers. Jesus silently and unresistingly follows Pilate from the

hall, still wearing the mockery of royal pomp. Pilate had calculated that the sight of Him in such guise, and bleeding from the lash, might turn hate into contempt, and perhaps give a touch of pity. 'Behold the man!' as he meant it, was as if he had said, 'Is this poor, bruised, spiritless sufferer worth hate or fear? Does He look like a King or a dangerous enemy?' Pilate for once drops the scoff of calling Him their King, and seeks to conciliate and move to pity. The profound meanings which later ages have delighted to find in his words, however warrantable, are no part of their design as spoken, and we gain a better lesson from the scene by keeping close to the thoughts of the actors. What a contrast between the vacillation of the governor, on the one hand, afraid to do right and reluctant to do wrong, and the dogged malignity of the rulers and their tools on the other, and the calm, meek endurance of the silent Christ, knowing all their thoughts, pitying all, and fixed in loving resolve, even firmer than the rulers' hate, to bear the utmost, that He might save a world!

Some pity may have stirred in the crowd, but the priests and their immediate dependants silenced it by their yell of fresh hate at the sight of the prisoner. Note how John gives the very impression of the fierce, brief roar, like that of wild beasts for their prey, by his 'Crucify, crucify!' without addition of the person. Pilate lost patience at last, and angrily and half seriously gives permission to them to take the law into their own hands. He really means, 'I will not be your tool, and if my conviction of "the Man's" innocence is to be of no account, you must punish Him; for I will not.' How far he meant to abdicate authority, and how far he was launching sarcasms, it

is difficult to say. Throughout he is sarcastic, and thereby indicates his weakness, indemnifying himself for being thwarted by sneers which sit so ill on authority.

But the offer, or sarcasm, whichever it was, missed fire, as the appeal to pity had done, and only led to the production of a new weapon. In their frantic determination to compass Jesus' death, the rulers hesitate at no degradation; and now they adduced the charge of blasphemy, and were ready to make a heathen the judge. To ask a Roman governor to execute their law on a religious offender, was to drag their national prerogative in the mud. But formal religionists, inflamed by religious animosity, are often the degraders of religion for the gratification of their hatred. They are poor preservers of the Church who call on the secular arm to execute their 'laws.' Rome went a long way in letting subject peoples keep their institutions; but it was too much to expect Pilate to be the hangman for these furious priests, on a charge scarcely intelligible to him.

What was Jesus doing while all this hell of wickedness and fury boiled round Him? Standing there, passive and dumb, 'as a sheep before her shearers.' Himself is the least conspicuous figure in the history of His own trial. In silent communion with the Father, in silent submission to His murderers, in silent pity for us, in silent contemplation of 'the joy that was set before Him,' He waits on their will.

III. Once more the scene changes to the interior of the prætorium (vs. 9-11). The rulers' words stirred a deepened awe in Pilate. He 'was the more afraid'; then he had been already afraid. His wife's dream, the impression already produced by the person of

Jesus, had touched him more deeply than probably he himself was aware of; and now this charge that Jesus had 'made Himself the Son of God' shook him. What if this strange man were in some sense a messenger of the gods? Had he been scourging one sent from them? Sceptical he probably was, and therefore superstitious; and half-forgotten and disbelieved stories of gods who had 'come down in the likeness of men' would swim up in his memory. If this Man were such, His strange demeanour would be explained. Therefore he carried Jesus in again, and, not now as judge, sought to hear from His own lips His version of the alleged claim.

Why did not Jesus answer such a question? His silence was answer; but, besides that, Pilate had not received as he ought what Jesus had already declared to him as to His kingdom and His relation to 'the truth,' and careless turning away from Christ's earlier words is righteously and necessarily punished by subsequent silence, if the same disposition remains. That it did remain, Christ's silence is proof. Had there been any use in answering, Pilate would not have asked in vain. If Jesus was silent, we may be sure that He who sees all hearts and responds to all true desires was so, because He knew that it was best to say nothing. The question of His origin had nothing to do with Pilate's duty then, which turned, not on whence Jesus had come, but on what Pilate believed Him to have done, or not to have done. He who will not do the plain duty of the moment has little chance of an answer to his questions about such high matters.

The shallow character of the governor's awe and interest is clearly seen from the immediate change of tone to arrogant reminder of his absolute authority

'To me dost Thou not speak?' The pride of offended dignity peeps out there. He has forgotten that a moment since he half suspected that the prisoner, whom he now seeks to terrify with the cross, and to allure with deliverance, was perhaps come from some misty heaven. Was that a temper which would have received Christ's answer to his question?

But one thing he might be made to perceive, and therefore Jesus broke silence for the only time in this section, and almost the only time before Pilate. He reads the arrogant Roman the lesson which he and all his tribe in all lands and ages need—that their power is derived from God, therefore in its foundation legitimate, and in its exercise to be guided by His will and used for His purposes. It was God who had brought the Roman eagles, with their ravening beaks and strong claws, to the Holy City. Pilate was right in exercising jurisdiction over Jesus. Let him see that he exercised justice, and let him remember that the power which he boasted that he 'had' was 'given.' The truth as to the source of power made the guilt of Caiaphas or of the rulers the greater, inasmuch as they had neglected the duties to which they had been appointed, and by handing over Jesus on a charge which they themselves should have searched out, had been guilty of 'theocratic felony.' This sudden flash of bold rebuke, reminding Pilate of his dependence, and charging him with the lesser but yet real 'sin,' went deeper than any answer to his question would have done, and spurred him to more earnest effort, as John points out. He 'sought to release Him,' as if formerly he had been rather simply unwilling to condemn than anxious to deliver.

IV. So the scene changes again to outside. Pilate

went out alone, leaving Jesus within, and was met before he had time, as would appear, to speak, by the final irresistible weapon which the rulers had kept in reserve. An accusation of treason was only too certain to be listened to by the suspicious tyrant who was then Emperor, especially if brought by the authorities of a subject nation. Many a provincial governor had had but a short shrift in such a case, and Pilate knew that he was a ruined man if these implacable zealots howling before him went to Tiberius with such a charge. So the die was cast. With rage in his heart, no doubt, and knowing that he was sacrificing 'innocent blood' to save himself, he turned away from the victorious mob, apparently in silence, and brought Jesus out once more. He had no more words to say to his prisoner. Nothing remained but the formal act of sentence, for which he seated himself, with a poor assumption of dignity, yet feeling all the while, no doubt, what a contemptible surrender he was making.

Judgment-seats and mosaic pavements do not go far to secure reverence for a judge who is no better than an assassin, killing an innocent man to secure his own ends. Pilate's sentence fell most heavily on himself. If 'the judge is condemned when the guilty is acquitted,' he is tenfold condemned when the innocent is sentenced.

Pilate returned to his sarcastic mood when he returned to his injustice, and found some satisfaction in his old jeer, 'your King.' But the passion of hatred was too much in earnest to be turned or even affected by such poor scoffs, and the only answer was the renewed roar of the mob, which had murder in its tone. The repetition of the governor's taunt. 'Shall

I crucify your King?' brought out the answer in which the rulers of the nation in their fury blindly flung away their prerogative. It is no accident that it was 'the chief priests' who answered, 'We have no king but Cæsar.' Driven by hate, they deliberately disown their Messianic hope, and repudiate their national glory. They who will not have Christ have to bow to a tyrant. Rebellion against Him brings slavery

AN EYE-WITNESS'S ACCOUNT OF THE CRUCIFIXION

'And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold Thy Son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.'—JOHN xix. 17-30.

IN great and small matters John's account adds much to the narrative of the crucifixion. He alone tells of the attempt to have the title on the Cross altered, of the tender entrusting of the Virgin to his care, and of the two 'words' 'I thirst' and 'It is finished.' He gives details which had been burned into his memory, such

as Christ's position 'in the midst' of the two robbers, and the jar of 'vinegar' standing by the crosses. He says little about the act of fixing Jesus to the Cross, but enlarges what the other Evangelists tell as to the soldiers 'casting lots.' He had heard what they said to one another. He alone distinctly tells that when He went forth, Jesus was bearing the Cross which afterwards Simon of Cyrene had to carry, probably because our Lord's strength failed.

Who appointed the two robbers to be crucified at the same time? Not the rulers, who had no such power but probably Pilate, as one more shaft of sarcasm which was all the sharper both because it seemed to put Jesus in the same class as they, and because they were of the same class as the man of the Jews' choice, Barabbas, and possibly were two of his gang. Jesus was 'in the midst,' where He always is, completely identified with the transgressors, but central to all things and all men. As He was in the midst on the Cross, with a penitent on one hand and a rejecter on the other, He is still in the midst of humanity, and His judgment-seat will be as central as His Cross was.

All the Evangelists give the title written over the Cross, but John alone tells that it was Pilate's malicious invention. He thought that he was having a final fling at the priests, and little knew how truly his title, which was meant as a bitter jest, was a fact. He had it put into the three tongues in use—'Hebrew,' the national tongue; 'Greek,' the common medium of intercourse between varying nationalities; and 'Latin,' the official language. He did not know that he was proclaiming the universal dominion of Jesus, and prophesying that wisdom as represented by Greece, law and imperial power as represented by Rome, and

all previous revelation as represented by Israel, would yet bow before the Crucified, and recognise that His Cross was His throne.

The 'high-priests' winced, and would fain have had the title altered. Their wish once more denied Jesus, and added to their condemnation, but it did not move Pilate. It would have been well for him if he had been as firm in carrying out his convictions of justice as in abiding by his bitter jest. He was obstinate in the wrong place, partly because he was angry with the rulers, and partly to recover his self-respect, which had been damaged by his vacillation. But his stiff-necked speech had a more tragic meaning than he knew, for 'what he had written' on his own life-page on that day could never be erased, and will confront him. We are all writing an imperishable record, and we shall have to read it out hereafter, and acknowledge our handwriting.

John next sets in strong contrast the two groups round the Cross—the stolid soldiers and the sad friends. The four legionaries went through their work as a very ordinary piece of military duty. They were well accustomed to crucify rebel Jews, and saw no difference between these three and former prisoners. They watched the pangs without a touch of pity, and only wished that death might come soon, and let them get back to their barracks. How blind men may be to what they are gazing at! If knowledge measures guilt, how slight the culpability of the soldiers! They were scarcely more guilty than the mallet and nails which they used. The Sufferer's clothes were their perquisite, and their division was conducted on cool business principles, and with utter disregard of the solemn nearness of death. Could callous indifference go

further than to cast lots for the robe at the very foot of the Cross?

But the thing that most concerns us here is that Jesus submitted to that extremity of shame and humiliation, and hung there naked for all these hours, gazed on, while the light lasted, by a mocking crowd. He had set the perfect Pattern of lowly self-abnegation when, amid the disciples in the upper room, He had 'laid aside His garments,' but now He humbles Himself yet more, being clothed only 'with shame.' Therefore should we clothe Him with hearts' love. Therefore God has clothed Him with the robes of imperial majesty.

Another point emphasised by John is the fulfilment of prophecy in this act. The seamless robe, probably woven by loving hands, perhaps by some of the weeping women who stood there, was too valuable to divide, and it would be a moment's pastime to cast lots for it. John saw, in the expedient naturally suggested to four rough men, who all wanted the robe but did not want to quarrel over it, a fulfilment of the cry of the ancient sufferer, who had lamented that his enemies made so sure of his death that they divided his garments and cast lots for his vesture. But he was 'wiser than he knew,' and, while his words were to his own apprehension but a vivid metaphor expressing his desperate condition, 'the Spirit which was in' him 'did signify' by them 'the sufferings of Christ.' Theories of prophecy or sacrifice which deny the correctness of John's interpretation have the New Testament against them, and assume to know more about the workings of inspiration than is either modest or scientific.

What a contrast the other group presents! John's enumeration of the women may be read so as to

mention four or three, according as 'His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas,' is taken to mean one woman or two. The latter is the more probable supposition, and it is also probable that the unnamed sister of our Lord's mother was no other than Salome, John's own mother. If so, entrusting Mary to John's care would be the more natural. Tender care, joined with consciousness that henceforth the relation of son and mother was to be supplanted, not merely by Death's separating fingers, but by faith's uniting bond, breathed through the word, so loving yet so removing, 'Woman, behold thy son!' Dying trust in the humble friend, which would go far to make the friend worthy of it, breathed in the charge, to which no form of address corresponding to 'Woman' is prefixed. Jesus had nothing else to give as a parting gift, but He gave these two to each other, and enriched both. He showed His own loving heart, and implied His faithful discharge of all filial duties hitherto. And He taught us the lesson, which many of us have proved to be true, that losses are best made up when we hear Him pointing us by them to new offices of help to others, and that, if we will let Him, He will point us too to what will fill empty places in our hearts and homes.

The second of the words on the Cross which we owe to John is that pathetic expression, 'I thirst.' Most significant is the insight into our Lord's consciousness which John, here as elsewhere, ventures to give. Not till He knew 'that all things were accomplished' did He give heed to the pangs of thirst, which made so terrible a part of the torture of crucifixion. The strong will kept back the bodily cravings so long as any unfulfilled duty remained. Now Jesus had nothing to do but to die, and before He died He let flesh

have one little alleviation. He had refused the stupefying draught which would have lessened suffering by dulling consciousness, but He asked for the draught which would momentarily slake the agony of parched lips and burning throat.

The words of verse 28 are not to be taken as meaning what Jesus said 'I thirst' with the mere intention of fulfilling the Scripture. His utterance was the plaint of a real need, not a performance to fill a part. But it is John who sees in that wholly natural cry the fulfilment of the psalm (Ps. lxxix. 21). All Christ's bodily sufferings may be said to be summed up in this one word, the only one in which they found utterance. The same lips that said, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink,' said this. Infinitely pathetic in itself, that cry becomes almost awful in its appeal to us when we remember who uttered it, and why He bore these pangs. The very 'Fountain of living water' knew the pang of thirst that every one that thirsteth might come to the waters, and might drink, not water only, but 'wine and milk, without money or price.'

John's last contribution to our knowledge of our Lord's words on the Cross is that triumphant 'It is finished,' wherein there spoke, not only the common dying consciousness of life being ended, but the certitude, which He alone of all who have died, or will die, had the right to feel and utter, that every task was completed, that all God's will was accomplished, all Messiah's work done, all prophecy fulfilled, redemption secured, God and man reconciled. He looked back over all His life and saw no failure, no falling below the demands of the occasion, nothing that could have been bettered, nothing that should not have been there. He looked upwards, and even at that moment He heard in His

soul the voice of the Father saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!'

Christ's work is finished. It needs no supplement. It can never be repeated or imitated while the world lasts, and will not lose its power through the ages. Let us trust to it as complete for all our needs, and not seek to strengthen 'the sure foundation' which it has laid by any shifting, uncertain additions of our own. But we may remember, too, that while Christ's work is, in one aspect, finished, when He bowed His head, and by His own will 'gave up the ghost,' in another aspect His work is not finished, nor will be, until the whole benefits of His incarnation and death are diffused through, and appropriated by, the world. He is working to-day, and long ages have yet to pass, in all probability, before the voice of Him that sitteth on the throne shall say 'It is done!'

THE TITLE ON THE CROSS

'Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross.'—JOHN xix. 19.

THIS title is recorded by all four Evangelists, in words varying in form but alike in substance. It strikes them all as significant that, meaning only to fling a jeer at his unruly subjects, Pilate should have written it, and proclaimed this Nazarene visionary to be He for whom Israel had longed through weary ages. John's account is the fullest, as indeed his narrative of all Pilate's shufflings is the most complete. He alone records that the title was tri-lingual (for the similar statement in the Authorised Version of Luke is not part of the original text). He alone gives the Jew's

request for an alteration of the title, and Pilate's bitter answer. That angry reply betrays his motive in setting up such words over a crucified prisoner's head. They were meant as a savage taunt of the Jews, not as an insult to Jesus, which would have been welcome to them. He seems to have regarded our Lord as a harmless enthusiast, to have had a certain liking for Him, and a languid curiosity as to Him, which came by degrees to be just tinged with awe as he felt that he could not quite make Him out. Throughout, he was convinced that His claim to be a king contained no menace for Cæsar, and he would have let Jesus go but for fear of being misrepresented at Rome. He felt that the sacrifice of one more Jew was a small price to pay to avert his accusation to Cæsar; he would have sacrificed a dozen such to keep his place. But he felt that he was being coerced to do injustice, and his anger and sense of humiliation find vent in that written taunt. It was a spurt of bad temper and a measure of his reluctance.

Besides the interest attaching to it as Pilate's work, it seems to John significant of much that it should have been fastened on the Cross, and that it should have been in the three languages, Hebrew (Aramaic), Greek, and Latin.

Let us deal with three points in succession.

I. The title as throwing light on the actors in the tragedy.

We may consider it, first, in its bearing on Jesus' claims. He was condemned by the priests on the theocratic charge of blasphemy, because He made Himself the Son of God. He was sentenced by Pilate on the civil charge of rebellion, which the priests brought against Him as an inference necessarily resulting from His claim to be the Son of God. They drew the same conclusion

as Nathanael did long before: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God,' and therefore 'Thou art the King of Israel.' And they were so far right that if the former designation is correct, the latter inevitably follows.

Both charges, then, turned on His personal claims. To Pilate He explained the nature of His kingdom, so as to remove any suspicion that it would bring Him and His subjects into collision with Rome, but He asserted His kingship, and it was His own claim that gave Pilate the material for His gibe. It is worth notice, then, that these two claims from His own lips, made to the authorities who respectively took cognisance of the theocratic and of the civic life of the nation, and at the time when His life hung on the decision of the two, were the causes of His judicial sentence. The people who allege that Jesus never made the preposterous claims for Himself which Christians have made for Him, but was a simple Teacher of morality and lofty religion, have never fairly faced the simple question: 'For what, then, was He crucified?' It is easy for them to dilate on the hatred of the Jewish officials and the gross earthliness of the masses, as explaining the attitude of both, but it is not so easy to explain how material was found for judicial process. One can understand how Jesus was detested by rulers, and how they succeeded in stirring up popular feeling against Him, but not how an indictment that would hold water was framed against Him. Nor would even Pilate's complaisance have gone so far as to have condemned a prisoner against whom all that could be said was that he was disliked because he taught wisely and well and was too good for his critics. The question is, not what made Jesus disliked, but what set the Law in motion against Him? And no plausible answer has ever been

given except the one that was nailed above His head on the Cross. It was not His virtues or the sublimity of His teaching, but His twofold claim to be Son of God and King of Israel that haled Him to His death.

We may further ask why Jesus did not clear up the mistakes, if they were mistakes, that led to His condemnation. Surely He owed it to the two tribunals before which He stood, no less than to Himself and His followers, to disown the erroneous interpretations on which the charges against Him were based. Even a Caiaphas was entitled to be told, if it were so, that He meant no blasphemy and was not claiming anything too high for a reverent Israelite, when He claimed to be the Son of God. If Jesus let the Sanhedrim sentence Him under a mistake of what His words meant, He was guilty of His own death.

We note, further, the light thrown by the Title on Pilate's action. It shows his sense of the unreality of the charge which he basely allowed himself to be forced into entertaining as a ground of condemning Jesus. If this enigmatical prisoner had had a sword, there would have been some substance in the charge against Him, but He was plainly an idea-monger, and therefore quite harmless, and His kingship only fit to be made a jest of and a means of girding at the rulers. 'Practical men' always under-estimate the power of ideas. The Title shows the same contempt for 'mere theorisers' as animated his question, 'What is truth?' How little he knew that this 'King,' at whom he thought that he could launch clumsy jests, had lodged in the heart of the Empire a power which would shatter and remould it!

In his blindness to the radiant truth that stood

before him, in the tragedy of his condemnation of that to which he should have yielded himself, Pilate stands out as a beacon for all time, warning the world against looking for the forces that move the world among the powers that the world recognises and honours. If we would not commit Pilate's fault over again, we must turn to 'the base things of this world' and the 'things that are not' and find in them the transforming powers destined to 'bring to nought things that are.'

Pilate's gibe was an unconscious prophecy. He thought it an exquisite jest, for it hurt. He was an instance of that strange irony that runs through history, and makes, at some crisis, men utter fateful words that seem put into their lips by some higher power. Caiaphas and he, the Jewish chief of the Sanhedrim and the Roman procurator, were foremost in Christ's condemnation, and each of them spoke such words, profoundly true and far beyond the speaker's thoughts. Was the Evangelist wrong in saying: 'This spake he not of himself?'

II. The Title on the Cross as unveiling the ground of Christ's dominion.

It seemed a ludicrous travesty of royalty that a criminal dying there, with a crowd of his 'subjects' gloating on his agonies and shooting arrowy words of scorn at him, should be a King. But His cross is His throne. It is so because His death is His great work for the world. It is so because in it we see, with melted hearts, the sublimest revelation of His love. Absolute authority belongs to utter self-sacrifice. He, and only He, who gives Himself wholly to and for me, thereby acquires the right of absolute command over me. He is the 'Prince of all the kings of the earth,'

because He has died and become the 'First-begotten from the dead.' From the hour when He said, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me,' down to the hour when the seer heard the storm of praise from 'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands' breaking round the throne, every New Testament reference to Christ's dominion is accompanied with a reference to His cross, and every reference to His cross merges in a reference to His throne. The crown of thorns was a revelation of the inmost nature of Christ's rule. The famous Iron Crown of Milan is a hard, cold circlet within a golden covering blazing with jewels. Christ's right to sway men, like His power to do so, rests on His sacrifice for men. A Christianity without a Cross is a Christianity without authority, as has been seen over and over again in the history of the Church, and as is being seen again to-day, if men would only look. A Christ without a Cross is a Christ without a Kingdom. The dominion of the world belongs to Him who can sway men's inmost motives. Hearts are His who has bought them with His own.

III. The Title as prophesying Christ's universal dominion.

The three tongues in which it was written were chosen simply to make it easy to read by the crowd from every part of the Empire assembled at the Passover. There were Palestinian Jews there who probably read Aramaic only, and representatives from the widely diffused Jewish emigration in Greek-speaking lands, as well as Roman officials and Jews from Italy who would be most familiar with Latin. Pilate wanted his shaft to reach them all. It was, in its tri-lingual character, a sign of Israel's degradation and a flourishing of the

whip in their faces, as a government order in English placarded in a Bengalee village might be, or a Russian ukase in Warsaw. Its very wording betrayed a foreign hand, for a Jew would have written 'King of Israel,' not 'of the Jews.'

But John divined a deeper meaning in this Title, just as he found a similar prophecy of the universality of Christ's death in the analogous word of Caiaphas. As in that saying he heard a faint prediction that Jesus should die 'not for that people only, but that He might also gather into one the scattered children of God,' so he feels that Pilate was wiser than he knew, and that his written words in their threefold garb symbolised the relation of Christ and His work to the three great types of civilisation which it found possessed of the field. It bent them all to its own purposes, absorbed them into itself, used their witness and was propagated by means of them, and finally sucked the life out of them and disintegrated them. The Jew contributed the morality and monotheism of the Old Testament; the Greek, culture and the perfected language that should contain the treasure, the fresh wine-skin for the new wine; the Roman made the diffusion of the kingdom possible by the *pax Romana*, and at first sheltered the young plant. All three, no doubt, marred as well as helped the development of Christianity, and infused into it deleterious elements, which cling to it to-day, but the prophecy of the Title was fulfilled and these three tongues became heralds of the Cross and with 'loud, uplifted trumpets blew' glad tidings to the ends of the world.

That Title thus became an unconscious prophecy of Christ's universal dominion. The Psalmist that sang of Messiah's world-wide rule was sure that 'all nations

shall serve Him,' and the reason why he was certain of it was 'for He shall deliver the needy when he crieth.' We may be certain of it for the same reason. He who can deal with man's primal needs, and is ready and able to meet every cry of the heart, will never want suppliants and subjects. He who can respond to our consciousness of sin and weakness, and can satisfy hungry hearts, will build His sway over the hearts whom He satisfies on foundations deep as life itself. The history of the past becomes a prophecy of the future. Jesus has drawn men of all sorts, of every stage of culture and layer of civilisation, and of every type of character to Him, and the power which has carried a peasant of Nazareth to be the acknowledged King of the civilised world is not exhausted, and will not be till He is throned as Saviour and Ruler of the whole earth. There is only one religion in the world that is obviously growing. The gods of Greece and Rome are only subjects for studies in Comparative Mythology, the labyrinthine pantheon of India makes no conquests, Buddhism is moribund. All other religions than Christianity are shut up within definite and comparatively narrow geographical and chronological limits. But in spite of premature jubulations of enemies and much hasty talk about the need for a re-statement (which generally means a negation) of Christian truth, we have a clear right to look forward with quiet confidence. Often in the past has the religion of Jesus seemed to be wearing or worn out, but it has a strange recuperative power, and is wont to startle its enemies' pæans over its grave by rising again and winning renewed victories. The Title on the Cross is for ever true, and is written again in nobler fashion 'on the vesture and on the thigh' of Him who

rides forth at last to rule the nations, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'

THE IRREVOCABLE PAST

'What I have written I have written.'—JOHN XIX. 22.

THIS was a mere piece of obstinacy. Pilate knew that he had prostituted his office in condemning Jesus, and he revenged himself for weak compliance by ill-timed mulishness. A cool-headed governor would have humoured his difficult subjects in such a trifle, as a just one would have been inflexible in a matter of life and death. But this man's facile yielding and his stiff-necked obstinacy were both misplaced. 'So I will, so I command. Let my will suffice for a reason,' was what he meant. He had written his gibe, and not all the Jews in Jewry should make him change.

But his petulant answer to the rulers' request for the removal of the offensive placard carried in it a deeper meaning, as the Title also did, and as the people's fierce yell, 'His blood be on us and on our children,' did. Possibly the Evangelist had some thought of that sort in recording this saying; but, at all events, I venture to take a liberty with it which I should not do if it were a word of God's, or if it were given for our instruction. So I take it now as expressing in a vivid way, and irrespective of Pilate's intention, the thought of the irrevocable past.

I. Every man is perpetually writing a permanent record of himself.

It is almost impossible to get the average man to think of his life as a whole, or to realise that the fleeting present leaves indelible traces. They seem to

fade away wholly. The record appears to be written in water. It is written in ink which is invisible, but as indelible as invisible. Grammarians define the perfect tense as that which expresses an action completed in the past and of which the consequences remain in the present. That is true of all our actions. Our characters, our circumstances, our remembrances, are all permanent. Every day we make entries in our diary.

II. That record, once written, is irrevocable.

We all know what it is to long that some one action should have been otherwise, to have taken some one step which perhaps has coloured years, and which we would give the world not to have taken. But it cannot be. Remorse cannot alter it. Wishes are vain. Repentance is vain. A new line of conduct is vain.

What an awful contrast in this respect between time future and time past! Think of the indefinite possibilities in the one, the rigid fixity of the other. Our present actions are like cements that dry quickly and set hard on exposure to the air—the dirt of the trowel abides on the soft brick for ever. Many cuneiform inscriptions were impressed with a piece of wood on clay, and are legible millenniums after.

We have to write *currente calamo*, and as soon as written, the MS. is printed and stereotyped, and no revising proofs nor erasures are possible. An action, once done, escapes from us wholly.

How needful, then, to have lofty principles ready at hand! The fresco painter must have a sure touch, and a quick hand, and a full mind.

What a boundless field the future offers us! How much it may be! How much, perhaps we resolve it shall be! What a shrunken heap the harvest is! Are you satisfied with what you have written?

III. This record, written here, is read yonder.

Our actions carry eternal consequences. These will be read by ourselves. Character remains. Memory remains.

We shall read with all illusions stripped away.

Others will read—God and a universe.

‘We shall all be *manifested* before the judgment-seat of Christ.’

IV. This record may be blotted out by the blood of Christ.

It cannot be made not to have been, but God’s pardon will be given, and in respect to all personal consequences it is made non-existent. Circumstances may remain, but their pressure is different. Character may be renewed and sanctified, and even made loftier by the evil past. Our dead selves may become ‘stepping-stones to higher things.’

Memory may remain, but its sting is gone, and new hopes, and joys, and work may fill the pages of our record.

‘He took away the handwriting that was against us, nailing it to His Cross.’

Our lives and characters may become a palimpsest. ‘I will write upon him My new name.’ ‘Ye are an epistle of Christ ministered by us.’

CHRIST’S FINISHED AND UNFINISHED WORK

‘Jesus . . . said, It is finished.’—JOHN xix. 30.

‘He said unto us, It is done.’—REV. xxi. 6.

ONE of these sayings was spoken from the Cross, the other from the Throne. The Speaker of both is the same. In the one, His voice ‘then shook the earth,’ as the rending rocks testified; in the other, His voice ‘will

shake not the earth only but also heaven'; for 'new heavens and a new earth' accompanied the proclamation. In the one, like some traveller ready to depart, who casts a final glance over his preparations, and, satisfied that nothing is omitted, gives his charioteer the signal and rolls away, Jesus Christ looked back over His life's work, and, knowing that it was accomplished, summoned His servant Death, and departed. In the other, He sets His seal to the closed book of the world's history, and ushers in a renovated universe. The one marks the completion of the work on which the world's redemption rests, the other marks the completion of the age-long process by which the world's redemption is actually realised. The one proclaims that the foundation is laid, the other that the headstone is set on the finished building. The one bids us trust in a past perfected work; the other bids us hope in the perfect accomplishment of the results of that work. Taken singly, these sayings are grand; united, they suggest thoughts needed always, never more needful than to-day.

I. We see here the work which was finished on the Cross.

The Evangelist gives great significance to the words of my first text, as is shown by his statement in a previous verse: 'Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, said, I thirst,' and then—'It is finished.' That is to say, there is something in that dying voice a great deal deeper and more wonderful than the ordinary human utterance with which a dying man might say, 'It is all over now. I have done,' for this utterance came from the consciousness that all things had been accomplished by Him, and that He had done His life's work.

Now, there, taking the words even in their most superficial sense, we come upon the strange peculiarity which marks off the life of Jesus Christ from every other life that was ever lived. There are no loose ends left, no unfinished tasks drop from His nerveless hands, to be taken up and carried on by others. His life is a rounded whole, with everything accomplished that had been endeavoured, and everything done that had been commanded. 'His hands have laid the foundation; His hands shall also finish.' He alone of the sons of men, in the deepest sense, completed His task, and left nothing for successors. The rest of us are taken away when we have reared a course or two of the structure, the dream of building which brightened our youth. The pen drops from paralysed hands in the middle of a sentence, and a fragment of a book is left. The painter's brush falls with his palette at the foot of his easel, and but the outline of what he conceived is on the canvas. All of us leave tasks half done, and have to go away before the work is completed. The half-polished columns that lie at Baalbec are but a symbol of the imperfection of every human life. But this Man said, 'It is finished,' and 'gave up the ghost.' Now, if we ponder on what lies in that consciousness of completion, I think we find, mainly, three things.

Christ rendered a complete obedience. All through His life we see Him, hearing with the inward ear the solemn voice of the Father, and responding to it with that 'I must' which runs through all His days, from the earliest dawning of consciousness, when He startled His mother with 'I must be about My Father's business,' until the very last moments. In that obedience to the all-present necessity which He cheerfully embraced and perfectly discharged, there was no flaw. He alone

of men looks back upon a life in which His clear consciousness detected neither transgression nor imperfection. In the midst of His career He could front His enemies with 'Which of you convinceth Me of sin?' and no man then, and no man in all the generations that have elapsed since—though some have been blind enough to try it, and malicious enough to utter their attempts,—has been able to answer the challenge. In the midst of His career He said, 'I do always the things that please Him'; and nobody then or since has been able to lay his finger upon an act of His in which, either by excess or defect, or contrariety, the will of God has not been fully represented. At the beginning of His career He said, in answer to the Baptist's remonstrance, 'It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,' and at the end of His career He looked back, and knowing that He had thus done what became Him—namely, fulfilled it all—He said, 'It is finished!'

The utterance further expresses Christ's consciousness of having completed the revelation of God. Jesus Christ has made known the Father, and the generations since have added nothing to His revelation. The very people, to-day, that turn away from Christianity, in the name of higher conceptions of the divine nature, owe their conceptions of it to the Christ from whom they turn. Not in broken syllables; not 'at sundry times and in divers manners,' but with the one perfect, full-toned name of God on His lips, and vocal in His life, He has declared the Father unto us. In the course of His career He said, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'; and, looking back on His life of manifestation of God, He proclaimed, 'It is finished!' And the world has since, with all its thinking, added nothing to the name which Christ has declared.

The utterance further expresses His consciousness of having made a completed, atoning Sacrifice. Remember that the words of my first text followed that awful cry that came from the darkness, and as by one lightning flash, show us the waves and billows rolling over His head. 'My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?' In that infinitely pathetic and profound utterance, to the interpretation of which our powers go but a little way, Jesus Christ blends together, in the most marvellous fashion, desolation and trust, the consciousness that God is His God, and the consciousness that He is bereft of the light of His presence. Brethren! I know of no explanation of these words which does justice to both the elements that are intertwined so intimately in them, except the old one, which listens to Him as they come from His quivering lip, and says, 'The Lord hath made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all.'

Ah, brethren! unless there was something a great deal more than the physical shrinking from physical death in that piteous cry, Jesus Christ did not die nearly as bravely as many a poor, trembling woman who, at the stake or the block, has owed her fortitude to Him. Many a blood-stained criminal has gone out of life with less tremor than that which, unless you take the explanation that Scripture suggests of the cry, marred the last hours of Jesus Christ. Having drained the cup, He held it up inverted when He said 'It is finished!' and not a drop trickled down the edge. He drank it that we might never need to drink it; and so His dying voice proclaimed that 'by one offering for sin for ever,' He 'obtained eternal redemption' for us.

II. Now, secondly, note the work which began from the Cross. Between my two texts lie untold centuries,

and the whole development of the consequences of Christ's death, like some great valley stretching between twin mountain-peaks on either side, which from some points of view will be foreshortened and invisible, but when gazed down upon, is seen to stretch widely leagues broad, from mountain ridge to mountain ridge. So my two texts, by the fact that millenniums have to interpose between the time when 'It is finished!' is spoken, and the time when 'It is done!' can be proclaimed from the Throne, imply that the interval is filled by a continuous work of our Lord's, which began at the moment when the work on the Cross ended.

Now it has very often been the case, as I take leave to think, that the interpretation of the former of these two texts has been of such a kind as to distort the perspective of Christian truth, and to obscure the fact of that continuous work of our Lord's. Therefore it may not be out of place if, in a sentence or two, I recall to you the plain teaching of the New Testament upon this matter. 'It is finished!' Yes; and as the lower course of some great building is but the foundation for the higher, when 'finished' it is but begun. The work which, in one aspect, is the close, in another aspect is the commencement of Christ's further activity. What did He say Himself, when He was here with His disciples? 'I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.' What was the last word that came fluttering down, like an olive leaf, into the bosoms of the men as they stood with uplifted faces gazing upon Him as He disappeared? 'Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the ages.' What is the keynote of the book which carries on the story of the Gospels in the history of the militant Church? 'The former treatise have I made . . . of all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach, until the day

in which He was taken up'—and, being taken up, continued, in a new form, both the doing and the teaching. Thus that book, misnamed the Acts of the Apostles, sets Him forth as the Worker of all the progress of the Church. Who is it that 'adds to the Church daily such as were being saved'? The Lord. Who is it that opened the hearts of the hearers to the message? The Lord. Who is it that flings wide the prison-gates when His persecuted servants are in chains? The Lord. Who is it that bids one man attach himself to the chariot of the eunuch of Ethiopia, and another man go and bear witness in Rome? The Lord. Through the whole of that book there runs the keynote, as its dominant thought, that men are but the instruments, and the hand that wields them is Christ's, and that He who wrought the finished work that culminated on Calvary is operating a continuous work through the ages from His Throne.

Take that last book of Scripture, which opens with a view of the ascended Christ 'walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks, and holding the stars in His right hand'; which further draws aside the curtains of the heavenly sanctuary, and lets us see 'the Lamb in the midst of the Throne,' opening the seven seals—that is to say, setting loose for their progress through the world the forces that make the history of humanity, and which culminates in the vision of the final battle in which the Incarnate Word of God goes forth to victory, with all the armies of heaven following Him. Are not its whole spirit and message that Jesus Christ, the Lamb who is the Antagonist of the Beast, is working through all the history of the world, and will work till its kingdoms are 'become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ'?

Now, that continuous operation of Jesus Christ in the midst of men is not to be weakened down to the mere continued influence of the truths which He proclaimed, or the Gospel which He brought. There is something a great deal more than the diminishing vibrations of a force long since set in operation, and slowly ceasing to act. Dead teachers do still 'rule our spirits from their urns'; but it is no dead Christ who, by the influence of what He did when He was living, sways the world and comforts His Church; it is a living Christ who to-day is working in His people, by His Spirit. Further, He works on the world through His people by the Word; they plant and water, He 'gives the increase.' And He is working in the world, for His Church and for the world, by His wielding of all power that is given to Him, in heaven and on earth. So that the work that is done upon earth He doeth it all Himself; and Christian people unduly limit the sphere of Christ's operations when they look back only to the Cross, and talk about a 'finished work' there, and forget that that finished work there is but the vestibule of the continuous work that is being done to-day.

Christian people! The present work of Christ needs working servants. We are here in order to carry on His work. The Apostle ventured to say that he was appointed 'to fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ'; we may well venture to say that we are here mainly to apply to the world the benefits resulting from the finished work upon the Cross. The accomplishment of redemption, and the realisation of the accomplished redemption, are two wholly different things. Christ has done the one. He says to us, 'You are honoured to help Me to do the other.' According to the accurate rendering of a great saying of the Old

Testament, 'Take no rest, and give Him no rest, till He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' Christ's work is finished; there is nothing for us to do with it but trust it. Christ's work is going on; come to His help. Ye are fellow-labourers with and to the Incarnate Truth.

III. I need not say more than a word about the third thought, suggested by these texts—viz., the completion of the work which began on the Cross.

'It is done!' That lies, no man knows how far, ahead of us. As surely as astronomers tell us that all this universe is hastening towards a central point, so surely 'that far-off divine event' is that 'to which the whole creation moves.' It is the blaze of light which fills the distant end of the dim vista of human history. Its elements are in part summed up in the context—the tabernacle of God with men, the perfected fellowship of the human with the divine, the housing of men in the very home and heart of God; 'a new heaven and a new earth,' a renovated universe; the removal of all evil, suffering, sorrow, sin, and tears. These things are to be, and shall be, when He says 'It is done!'

Brethren! nothing else than such an issue can be the end of Creation, for nothing else than such is the purpose of God for man, and God is not going to be beaten by the world and the devil. Nothing else than such can be the issue of the Cross; for 'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied,' and Christ is not going to labour in vain, and spend His life, and give His breath and His blood for nought.

Nothing but the work finished on the Cross guarantees the coming of that perfected issue. I know not where else there is hope for mankind, looking on the history of humanity, except in that great message, that Jesus

Christ, the Son of God, has come, has died, lives for ever, and is the world's King and Lord.

So for ourselves, in regard to the one part of the work, let us listen to Him saying 'It is finished!' abandon all attempts to eke it out by additions of our own, and cast ourselves on the finished Revelation, the finished Obedience, the finished Atonement, made once for all on the Cross. But as for the continuous work going on through the ages, let us cast ourselves into it with earnestness, self-sacrifice, consecration, and continuity, for we are fellow-workers with Christ, and Christ will work in, with, and for us if we will work for Him.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

'These things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.'—JOHN xix. 36.

THE Evangelist, in the words of this text, points to the great Feast of the Passover and to the Paschal Lamb, as finding their highest fulfilment, as he calls it, in Jesus Christ. For this purpose of bringing out the correspondence between the shadow and the substance he avails himself of a singular coincidence concerning a perfectly unimportant matter—viz., the abnormally rapid sinking of Christ's physical strength in the crucifixion, by which the final indignity of breaking the bones of the sufferers was avoided in His case. John sees, in that entirely insignificant thing, a kind of fingerpost pointing to far more important, deeper, and real correspondences. We are not to suppose that he was so purblind, and attached so much importance to externals, as that this outward coincidence exhausted in his conception the correspondence between the two

But it was a trifle that suggested a greater matter. It was a help aiding gross conceptions and common minds to grasp the inward relation between Jesus and that Passover rite. But just as our Lord would have fulfilled the prophecy about the King coming 'meek, and having salvation,' though He had never ridden on a literal ass into the literal Jerusalem, so our Lord would have 'fulfilled' the shadow of the Passover with the substance of His own sacrifice if there had never been this insignificant correspondence, in outward things, between the two.

But whilst my text is the Evangelist's commentary, the question arises, How did he come to recognise that our Lord was all which that Passover signified? And the answer is, he recognised it through Christ's own teaching. He does not record the institution of the Lord's Supper. It did not fall into his scheme to deal with external events of that sort, and he knew that it had been sufficiently taught by the three earlier Gospels, to which his is a supplement. But though he did not narrate the institution, he takes it for granted in the words of my text, and his vindication of his seeing the fulfilment of 'A bone of Him shall not be broken' in the incident to which I have referred, lies in this, that Jesus Christ Himself swept away the Passover and substituted the memorial feast of the Lord's Supper 'This do in remembrance of Me,' said at the table where the Paschal lamb had been eaten, sufficiently warrants John's allusion here.

So then, marking the fact that our Evangelist is but carrying out the lesson that he had learned in the upper room, we may fairly take the identification of the Paschal lamb with the crucified Christ as being the last instance in which our Lord Himself laid His

hand upon Old Testament incidents and said, 'They all mean Me.' And it is from that point of view, and not merely for the purpose of dealing with the words that I have read as our starting-point, that I wish to speak now.

I. Now then, the first thing that strikes me is that in this substitution of Himself for the Passover we have a strange instance of Christ's supreme authority.

Try to fling yourself back in imagination to that upper room, where Jesus and a handful of Galileans were sitting, and remember the sanctity which immemorial usage had cast round that centre and apex of the Jewish ritual, established at the Exodus by a solemn divine appointment, intended to commemorate the birth of the nation, venerable by antiquity and association with the most vehement pulsations of national feeling, the centre point of Jewish religion. Christ said: 'Put it all away; do not think about the Exodus; do not think about the destroying Angel; do not think about the deliverance. Forget all the past; do this in remembrance of Me.' Take into account that the Passover had a double sacredness, as a religious festival, and also as commemorating the birthday of the nation, and *then* estimate what a strange sense of His own importance the Man must have had who said: 'That past is done with, and it is *Me* that you have to think of now.' If I might venture to take a very modern illustration without vulgarising a great thing, suppose that on the other side of the Atlantic somebody were to stand up and say, 'I abrogate the Fourth of July and Independence Day. Do not think about Washington and the establishment of the United States any more. Think about me!' That is exactly what Jesus Christ did. Only instead of a century there were

millenniums of observance which He thus laid aside. So I say that is a strange exercise of authority.

What does it imply? It implies two things, and I must say a word about each of them. It implies that Christ regarded the whole of the ancient system of Judaism, its history, its law, its rites of worship, as pointing onwards to Himself, that He recognised in it a system the whole *raison d'être* of which was anticipatory and preparatory of Himself. For Him the Decalogue was given, for Him priests were consecrated, for Him kings were anointed, for Him prophets spake, for Him sacrifices smoked, for Him festivals were appointed, and the nation and its history were all one long proclamation: 'The King cometh! go ye forth to meet Him.' You cannot get less than that out of the way in which He handled, as is told in this Gospel, Jacob's ladder, the Serpent in the wilderness, the Manna that fell from Heaven, the Pillar of Cloud that led the people, the Rock that gushed forth water, and now, last of all, the Passover, which was the very shining apex of the whole sacrificial and ritual system.

And remember, too, that this way of dealing with all the institutions of the nation as meaning, in their inmost purpose, Himself, is exactly parallel to His way of dealing with the sacred words of Mosaic commandment and prohibition in the Sermon on the Mount, where He set side by side as of equal—I was going to say, and I should have been right in saying, identical—authority what was 'said to them of old time' and what 'I say unto you.' Amidst the dust of our present controversies as to the processes by which, and the times at which, the Old Testament books assumed their present form, there is grave danger that

the essential thing about the whole matter should be obscured. The way in which what is called Higher Criticism may finally locate the origins and dates of the various parts of that ancient record and that ancient system does not in the slightest degree affect the outstanding characteristic of the whole, that it is the product of the divine hand, working (if you will) through men who had more freedom of action whilst they were its organs than our grandfathers thought. Be it so; but still that divine Hand shaped the whole in order that, besides its educational effects upon the generations that received it, there should shine through it all the expectation of the coming King. And I venture to say that, however grateful we may be to modern investigation for light upon these other points to which I have referred, the ignorant reader that reads Jesus Christ into all the Old Testament may be very uncritical and mistaken in regard to details, but he has got hold of the root of the matter, and is nearer to the apprehension of the essence and spirit and purpose of the ancient Revelation than the most learned critic who does not see that it is the preparation for, and the prophecy of, Jesus Christ Himself. And the vindication of such a position lies in this, among other facts, that He in the upper room, in harmony with, and in completion of, all that He had previously spoken about His relation to the Old Testament, claimed the Passover as the prophecy of Himself, and said, 'I am the Lamb of God.'

I need not dwell, I suppose, on the other consideration that is involved in this strange exercise of authority—viz., the naturalness, as without any sense of doing anything presumptuous or extraordinary, with which Christ assumes His right to handle divine appointments

with the most perfect freedom, to modify them, to re-shape them, to divert them from their first purpose, and to enjoin them with an authority equal to that with which the Lord said unto Moses, 'Keep ye this day through your generations.' There is only one supposition on which I, for my part, can understand that conduct—that He was the possessor of authority the same as the Authority that had originally instituted the rite.

And so, dear brethren! when our Lord said, 'Do this in remembrance of Me,' I pray you to ask yourselves, What did that involve in regard to His nature and the source of His authority over us? And what did it involve in regard to His relation to that ancient Revelation?

II. And now another point that I would suggest is—we have, in this substitution of the new rite for the old, our Lord's clear declaration of what was the very heart of His work in the world.

'This do in remembrance of Me.' What is it, then, to which He points? Is it to the wisdom, the tenderness, the deep beauty, the flashing moral purity that gleamed and shone lambent in His words? No! Is it to the gracious self-oblivion, the gentle accessibility, the loving pity, the leisurely heart always ready to help, the eye ready to fill with tears, the hand ever outstretched and ever laden with blessings? No! It is the death on the Cross which He, if I might so say, isolates, at least which He underscores with red lines, and which He would have us remember, as we remember nothing else. Brethren! rites are insignificant in many aspects, but are often of enormous importance as witnesses to truths. And I point to the Lord's Supper, the one rite of the Christian

Church, which is to be repeated over and over and over again, and see in it the great barrier which has rendered it impossible, and will render it impossible, as I believe, for evermore, that a Christianity, which obscures the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, should ever pose as the full representation of the Master's mind, or as the full expression of the Saviour's word.

What do men and churches that falter in their allegiance to the truth of Christ's redemptive death do with the Lord's Supper? Nothing! For the most part they ignore it, or if they retain it, do not, for the life of them, know how to explain it, or why it should be there. The explanation of why it is there is the great truth, of which it is the clear utterance and the strong defence, the truth that 'Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,' and that 'the Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for the many.'

What did that Passover say? Two things it said, the blood that was sprinkled on the lintels and on the door-posts was the token to the destroying Angel, as with his broad, silent pinions he swept through the land, bringing a blacker night into Egyptian darkness, and leaving behind him no house 'in which there was not one dead.' All the houses of which the occupants had put the ruddy mark on the lintels and on the door-posts, and were wise enough not to go forth from behind the shelter of that mark on the door, were safe when the morning dawned. And so to us all who, by our sinfulness, have brought down upon our heads exposedness to that retribution, which, in a righteously governed universe, must needs follow sin, and to that death which the separation from God—the neces-

sary result of sin—most surely is, there is proffered in that great Sacrifice shelter from the destroying sword.

But that is not all. Whilst the blood on the posts meant security, the Lamb on the table meant emancipation. So they who find in the dying Christ their exemption from the last consequences of transgression, find, in partaking of the Christ whose sacrifice is their pardon, the communication of a new power, which sets them free from a worse than Egyptian bondage, and enables them to shake from their emancipated limbs the fetters of the grimmest of the Pharaohs that have wielded a tyrannous dominion over them. Pardon and freedom, the creation of a nation subject only to the law of Jehovah Himself—these were the facts that the Passover festival and the Passover lamb signified, and these are the facts which, in nobler fashion, are brought to us by Jesus Christ. So, I beseech you, let Him teach you what His work in the world is, as He lays His own hand on that highest of the ancient festivals, and endorses the Baptist's declaration, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'

III. Now, lastly, let me ask you to notice how, in this regal and authoritative dealing by our Lord with that ancient festival, there lies a loving provision for our weakness.

Surely we may venture to say that Jesus Christ desired to be remembered, even by that handful of poor people, and by us, not only for our sakes. but because His heart, too, craved that He should not be forgotten by those whom He was leaving. As you may remember, the dying king turned to the bishop standing by him, with the enigmatical word which

no one understood but the receiver of it—‘Remember!’ so did Jesus Christ. He appeals to our thankfulness, He appeals to our affections, He lets us see that He wishes to live in our memories, because He delights in it, as well as because it is for our profit.

The Passover was purely and simply a rite of remembrance. I venture to believe that the Lord’s Supper is nothing more. I know how people talk about the bare, bald, Zwinglian ideas of the Communion. They do look very bald and bare by the side of modern notions and mediæval notions resuscitated. Well, I had rather have the bareness than I would have it overlaid by coverings under which there is room for abundance of vermin to lurk. Christ puts the Lord’s Supper in the place of the Passover. The Passover was a purely memorial rite. You Christian people will understand the spirituality of the whole Gospel system, and the nature of the only bond which unites men to Jesus and brings spiritual blessings to them—viz. faith—all the better, the more you cling, in spite of all that is going on round us to-day, to that simple, intelligible, Scriptural notion that we commemorate the Sacrifice, not offer the Sacrifice. Jesus Christ said that the Lord’s Supper was to be observed ‘in remembrance of Me.’ That was His explanation of its purpose, and I for one am content to take as the expounder of the laws of the feast, the feast’s own Founder.

Now one more word. In the Passover men fed on the Sacrifice. Jesus Christ presents Himself to each of us as at once the Sacrifice for our sins and the Food of our souls. If you will keep your minds in touch with the truth about Him, and with Him whom the truth about Him reveals to you, if you will keep your

hearts in touch with that great and unspeakable sign of God's love, if you will keep your wills in submission to His authority, if you will let His blood, 'which is the life,' or as you may otherwise word it, His Spirit, come into your lives, and be your spirit, your motive, then you will go out from the table, not like the disciples to flee, and deny, and forget, nor like the Israelites to wander in a wilderness, but strengthened for many a day of joyous service and true communion, and will come at last to what He has promised us: 'Ye shall sit with Me at My table in My Kingdom,' whence we shall go 'no more out.'

JOSEPH AND NICODEMUS

'And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; . . . And there came also Nicodemus which at the first came to Jesus by night.'—JOHN xix. 38, 39.

WHILE Christ lived, these two men had been unfaithful to their convictions; but His death, which terrified and paralysed and scattered His avowed disciples, seems to have shamed and stung them into courage. They came now, when they must have known that it was too late, to lavish honour and tears on the corpse of the Master whom they had been too cowardly to acknowledge, whilst acknowledgment might yet have availed. How keen an arrow of self-condemnation must have pierced their hearts as they moved in their offices of love, which they thought that He could never know, round His dead corpse!

They were both members of the Sanhedrim; the same motives, no doubt, had withheld each of them from

confessing Christ; the same impulses united them in this too late confession of discipleship. Nicodemus had had the conviction, at the beginning of Christ's ministry, that He was at least a miraculously attested and God-sent Teacher. But the fear which made him steal to Jesus by night—the unenviable distinction which the Evangelist pitilessly reiterates at each mention of him—arrested his growth and kept him dumb when silence was treason. Joseph of Arimathea is described by two of the Evangelists as 'a disciple'; by the other two as a devout Israelite, like Simeon and Anna, 'waiting for the Kingdom of God.' Luke informs us that he had not concurred in the condemnation of Jesus, but leads us to believe that his dissent had been merely silent. Perhaps he was more fully convinced than Nicodemus, and at the same time even more timid in avowing his convictions.

We may take these two contrite cowards as they try to atone for their unfaithfulness to their living Master by their ministrations to Him dead, as examples of secret disciples, and see here the causes, the misery, and the cure of such.

I. Let us look at them as illustrations of secret discipleship and its causes.

They were restrained from the avowal of the Messiahship of Jesus by fear. There is nothing in the organisation of society at this day to make any man afraid of avowing the ordinary kind of Christianity which satisfies the most of us; rather it is the proper thing with the bulk of us middle-class people, to say that in some sense or other we are Christians. But when it comes to a real avowal, a real carrying out of a true discipleship, there are as many and as formidable, though very different, impediments in

the way to-day, from those which blocked the path of these two cowards in our text. In all regions of life it is hard to work out into practice any moral conviction whatever. How many of us are there who have beliefs about social and moral questions which we are ashamed to avow in certain companies for fear of the finger of ridicule being pointed at us? It is not only in the Church, and in reference to purely religious belief, that we find the curse of secret discipleship, but it is everywhere. Wherever there are moral questions which are yet the subject of controversy, and have not been enthroned with the hallelujahs of all men, you get people that carry their convictions shut up in their own breasts, and lock their lips in silence, when there is most need of frank avowal. The political, social, and moral conflicts of this day have their 'secret disciples,' who will only come out of their holes when the battle is over, and will then shout with the loudest.

But to turn to the more immediate subject before us, how many men and women, I wonder, are there who ought to be and are not, distinctly and openly united with the Christian community?

I do not mean to say—God forbid that I should—that connection with any existing church is the same as a connection with Jesus Christ, or that the neglect to be so associated is tantamount to secret discipleship; I know there are plenty of other ways of acknowledging Him than that, but I am quite sure that this is one department in which a large number of men, in all our congregations—and there are not a few in this congregation—need a very plain word of earnest remonstrance. It is one way of manifesting whose you are, that you should unite yourselves openly with those who belong to Him, and who try to serve Him. I do

not dwell upon this matter, because I do not wish to be misunderstood, as if I supposed that union to a church is equivalent to union with Him; or that a connection with a church is the only, or even the principal way of making an open avowal of Christian principle; but I am certain that amongst us in this day there is a laxity in this matter which is doing harm both to the Church and to some of you. Therefore I say to you, dear friends, suffer the word of exhortation as to the duty of openly uniting yourselves with the Christian community.

But far higher and more important than that—you ever say anyhow that you belong to Jesus Christ? In a society like ours, in which the influence of Christian morality affects a great many people who have no personal connection with Him, it is not always enough that the life should preach, because over a very large field of ordinary daily life the underground influence, so to speak, of Christian ethics has infiltrated and penetrated, so that many a tree bears a greener leaf because of the water that has found its way to it from the river, though it be planted far from its banks. Even those who are not Christians live outward lives largely regulated by Christian principle. The whole level of morality has been heaved up, as the coastline has sometimes been by hidden fires slowly working, by the imperceptible, gradual influence of the gospel.

So it needs sometimes that you should say 'I am a Christian,' as well as that you should live like one. Ask yourselves, dear friends! whether you have buttoned your greatcoat over your uniform that nobody may know whose soldier you are. Ask yourselves whether you have sometimes held your tongues because you knew that if you spoke people would find out where

you came from and what country you belonged to. Ask yourselves, Have you ever accompanied the witness of your lives with the commentary of your confession? Did you ever, anywhere but in a church, stand up and say, 'I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, *my* Lord'?

And then ask yourselves another question: Have you ever dared to be singular? We are all of us in this world often thrust into circumstances in which it is needful that we should say, 'So do not I because of the fear of the Lord.' Boys go to school; they used always to kneel down at their bedsides and say their prayers when they were at home. They do not like to do it with all those critical and cruel eyes—and there are no eyes more critical and more cruel than young eyes—fixed upon them, and so they give up prayer. A young man comes to Manchester, goes into a warehouse, pure of life, and with a tongue that has not blossomed into rank fruit of obscenity and blasphemy. And he hears, at the next desk there, words that first of all bring a blush to his cheek, and he is tempted into conduct that he knows to be a denial of his Master. And he covers up his principles, and goes with the tempters into the evil. I might sketch a dozen other cases, but I need not. In one form or other, we have all to go through the same ordeal. We have sometimes to dare to be in a minority of one, if we will not be untrue to our Master and to ourselves.

Now the reasons for this unfaithfulness to conviction and to Christ, are put by the Apostle here in a very blunt fashion—'For fear of the Jews.' That is not what we say to ourselves; some of us say, 'Oh! I have got beyond outward organisations. I find it enough to be united to Christ. The Christian communities are very imperfect. There is not any of

them that I quite see eye to eye with. So I stand apart, contemplating all, and happy in my unsectarianism.' Yes, I quite admit the faults, and suppose that as long as men think at all they will not find any Church which is entirely to their mind; and I rejoice to think that some day we shall all outgrow visible organisations—when we get there where the seer 'saw no temple therein.' Admitting all that, I also know that isolation is always weakness, and that if a man stand apart from the wholesome friction of his brethren, he will get to be a great diseased mass of oddities, of very little use either to himself, or to men, or to God. It is not a good thing, on the whole, that people should fight for their own hands, and the wisest thing any of us can do is, preserving our freedom of opinion, to link ourselves with some body of Christian people, and to find in them our shelter and our home.

But these two in our text were moved by 'fear.' They dreaded ridicule, the loss of position, the expulsion from Sanhedrim and synagogue, social ostracism, and all the armoury of offensive weapons which would have been used against them by their colleagues. So, ignobly they kept their thumb on their convictions, and the two of them sat dumb in the council when the scornful question was asked, 'Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?' when they ought to have started to their feet and said 'Yes, we have!' And when Nicodemus ventured a feeble remonstrance, which he carefully divested of all appearance of personal sympathy, and put upon the mere abstract ground of fair play—'Doth our law judge any man before it hear him?'—one contemptuous question was enough to reduce him to silence. 'Art thou also of Galilee?' was enough to cow him into dropping his

timid plea for Him whom in his heart he believed to be the Messiah.

So with us, the fear of loss of position comes into play. I have heard of people who settled the congregation which they should honour by their presence from the consideration of the social advantages which it offered. I have heard of their saying, 'Oh! we cannot attach ourselves to such and such a community; there is no society for the children.' Then many of us are very much afraid of being laughed at. Ridicule, I think, to sensitive people in a generation like ours, is pretty nearly as bad as the old rack and the physical torments of martyrdom. We have all got so nervous and high-strung nowadays, and depend so much upon other people's good opinion, that it is a dreadful thing to be ridiculed. Timid people do not come to the front and say what they believe, and take up unpopular causes, because they cannot bear to be pointed at and pelted with the abundant epithets of disparagement, which are always flung at earnest people who will not worship at the appointed shrines, and have sturdy convictions of their own.

Ridicule breaks no bones. It has no power if you make up your mind that it shall not have. Face it, and it will only be unpleasant for a moment at first. When a child goes into the sea to bathe, he is uncomfortable till his head has been fairly under water, and then after that he is all right. So it is with the ridicule which out-and-out Christian faithfulness may bring on us. It only hurts at the beginning, and people very soon get tired. Face your fears and they will pass away. It is not perhaps a good advice to give unconditionally, but it is a very good one in regard of all moral questions—always do what you are afraid to do.

In nine cases out of ten it will be the right thing to do. If people would only discount 'the fear of men which bringeth a snare' by making up their minds to neglect it, there would be fewer 'dumb dogs' and 'secret disciples' haunting and weakening the Church of Christ.

II. I have spent too much time upon this part of my subject, and I must deal briefly with the following. Let me say a word about the illustrations that we have in this text of the miseries of this secret discipleship.

How much these two men lost—all those three years of communion with the Master; all His teaching, all the stimulus of His example, all the joy of fellowship with Him! They might have had a treasure in their memories that would have enriched them for all their days, and they had flung it all away because they were afraid of the curled lip of a long-bearded Pharisee or two.

And so it always is; the secret disciple diminishes his communion with his Master. It is the valleys which lay their bosoms open to the sun that rejoice in the light and warmth; the narrow clefts in the rocks that shut themselves grudgingly up against the light, are all dank and dark and dismal. And it is the men that come and avow their discipleship that will have the truest communion with their Lord. Any neglected duty puts a film between a man and his Saviour; any conscious neglect of duty piles up a wall between you and Christ. Be sure of this, that if from cowardly or from selfish regard to position and advantages, or any other motive, we stand apart from Him, and have our lips locked when we ought to speak, there will steal over our hearts a coldness, His face will be averted from us, and our eyes will not dare to seek, with the same confidence and joy, the light of His countenance.

What you lose by unfaithful wrapping of your con-

victions in a napkin and burying them in the ground is the joyful use of the convictions, the deeper hold of the truth by which you live, and before which you bow, and the true fellowship with the Master whom you acknowledge and confess. And when these men came for Christ's corpse and bore it away, what a sharp pang went through their hearts! They woke at last to know what cowardly traitors they had been. If you are a disciple at all, and a secret one, you will awake to know what you have been doing, and the pang will be a sharp one. If you do not awake in this life, then the distance between you and your Lord will become greater and greater; if you do, then it will be a sad reflection that there are years of treason lying behind you. Nicodemus and Joseph had the veil torn away by the contemplation of their dead Master. You may have the veil torn away from your eyes by the sight of the throned Lord; and when you pass into the heavens may even there have some sharp pang of condemnation when you reflect how unfaithful you have been.

Blessed be His name! The assurance is firm that if a man be a disciple he shall be saved; but the warning is sure that if he be an unfaithful and a secret disciple there will be a life-long unfaithfulness to a beloved Master to be purged away 'so as by fire.'

III. And so, lastly, let me point you to the cure.

These men learned to be ashamed of their cowardice, and their dumb lips learned to speak, and their shy, hidden love forced for itself a channel by which it could flow out into the light; because of Christ's death. And in another fashion that same death and Cross are for us, too, the cure of all cowardice and selfish silence. The sight of Christ's Cross makes the coward brave. It was no small piece of courage for Joseph to go to

Pilate and avow his sympathy with a condemned criminal. The love must have been very true which was forced to speak by disaster and death. And to us the strongest motive for stiffening our vacillating timidity into an iron fortitude, and fortifying us strongly against the fear of what man can do to us, is to be found in gazing upon His dying love who met and conquered all evils and terrors for our sakes.

That Cross will kindle a love which will not rest concealed, but will be 'like the ointment of the right hand which bewrayeth itself.' I can fancy men to whom Christ is only what He was to Nicodemus at first, 'a Teacher sent from God,' occupying Nicodemus' position of hidden belief in His teaching without feeling any need to avow themselves His followers; but if once into our souls there has come the constraining and the melting influence of that great and wondrous love which died for us, then, dear brethren, it is unnatural that we should be silent. If those 'for whom Christ has died' should hold their peace, 'the stones would immediately cry out.' That death, wondrous, mysterious, terrible, but radiant, and glorious with hope, with pardon, with holiness for us and for all the world—that death smites on the chords of our hearts, if I may so speak, and brings out music from them all. The love that died for me will force me to express my love; 'Then shall the tongue of the dumb sing,' and silence will be impossible.

The sight of the Cross not only leads to courage, and kindles a love which demands expression, but it impels to joyful surrender. Joseph gave a place in his own new tomb, where he hoped that one day his bones should be laid by the side of the Master against whom he had sinned—for he had no thought of a resurrection.

Nicodemus brought a lavish, almost an extravagant, amount of costly spices, as if by honour to the dead he could atone for treason to the living. And both the one and the other teach us that if once we gain the true vision of that great and wondrous love that died on the Cross for us, then the natural language of the loving heart is—

‘Here, Lord! I give *myself* away;

’Tis all that I can do.’

If following Him openly involves sacrifices, the sacrifices will be sweet, so long as our hearts look to His dying love. All love delights in expression, and most of all in expression by surrender of precious things, which are most precious because they give love materials which it may lay at the beloved’s feet. What are position, possessions, reputation, capacities, perils, losses, self, but the ‘sweet spices’ which we are blessed enough to be able to lay upon the altar which glorifies the Giver and the gift? The contemplation of Christ’s sacrifice—and that alone—will so overcome our natural selfishness as to make sacrifice for His dear sake most blessed.

I beseech you, then, look ever to Him dying on the Cross for each of us. It will kindle our courage, it will make our hearts glow with love, it will turn our silence into melody and music of praise; it will lead us to heights of consecration and joys of confession; and so it will bring us at last into the possession of that wondrous honour which He promised when He said, ‘He that confesseth Me before men, him will I also confess; and he that denieth Me before men, him will I also deny.’

THE GRAVE IN A GARDEN

'In the garden a new tomb.'—JOHN xix. 41 (R.V.).

THIS is possibly no more than a topographical note introduced merely for the sake of accuracy. But it is quite in John's manner to attach importance to these apparent trifles and to give no express statement that he is doing so. There are several other instances in the Gospel where similar details are given which appear to have had in his eyes a symbolical meaning—e.g. 'And it was night.' There may have been such a thought in his mind, for all men in high excitement love and seize symbols, and I can scarcely doubt that the reason which induced Joseph to make his grave in a garden was the reason which induced John to mention so particularly its situation, and that they both discerned in that garden round the sepulchre, the expression of what was to the one a dim desire, to the other 'a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'—that they who are laid to rest in the grave shall come forth again in new and fairer life, as 'the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to bud.'

To us at all events on Easter morning, with nature rising on every hand from her winter death, and 'life re-orient out of dust,' that new sepulchre in the garden may well serve for the starting-point of the familiar but ever-precious lessons of the day.

I. A symbol of death and decay as interwoven with all nature and every joy.

We think of Eden and the first coming of death.

The grave was fittingly in the garden, because nature too is subject to the law of decay and death. The

flowers fade and men die. Meditative souls have ever gathered lessons of mortality there, and invested death with an alien softness by likening it to falling leaves and withered blooms. But the contrast is greater than the resemblance, and painless dropping of petals is not a parallel to the rending of soul and body.

The garden's careless wealth of beauty and joy continues unconcerned whatever befalls us. 'One generation cometh and another goeth, but the earth abideth for ever.'

The grave is in the garden because all our joys and works have sooner or later death associated with them.

Every relationship.

Every occupation.

Every joy.

The grave in the garden bids us bring the wholesome contemplation of death into all life.

It may be a harm and weakening to think of it, but should be a strength.

II. The dim hopes with which men have fought against death.

To lay the dead amid blooming nature and fair flowers has been and is natural to men. The symbolism is most natural, deep, and beautiful, expressing the possibility of life and even of advance in the life after apparent decay. There is something very pathetic in so eager a grasping after some stay for hope.

All these natural symbols are insufficient. They are not proofs, they are only pretty analogies. But they are all that men have on which to build their hopes as to a future life apart from Christ. That future was vague, a region for hopes and wishes or fears, not for certainty, a region for poetic fancies. The thoughts

of it were very faintly operative. Men asked, Shall we live again? Conscience seemed to answer, Yes! The instinct of immortality in men's souls grasped at these things as proofs of what it believed without them, but there was no clear light.

III. The clear light of certain hope which Christ's resurrection brings.

The grave in the garden reversed Adam's bringing of death into Eden.

Christ's resurrection as a fact bears on the belief in a future state as nothing else can.

It changes hope into certainty. It shows by actual example that death has nothing to do with the soul; that life is independent of the body; that a man after death is the same as before it. The risen Lord was the same in His relations to His disciples, the same in His love, in His memory, and in all else.

It changes shadowy hopes of continuous life into a solid certainty of resurrection life. The former is vague and powerless. It is impossible to conceive of the future with vividness unless as a bodily life. And this is the strength of the Christian conception of the future life, that corporeity is the end and goal of the redeemed man.

It changes terror and awe into joy, and opens up a future in which He is.

We shall be with Him.

We shall be like Him.

Now we can go back to all these incomplete analogies and use them confidently. Our faith does not rest upon them but upon what has actually been done on this earth.

Christ is 'the First fruits of them that slept.' What will the harvest be!

As the single little seed is poor and small by the side of the gorgeous flower that comes from it; so will be the change. 'God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him.'

How then to think of death for ourselves and for those who are gone? Thankfully and hopefully.

THE RESURRECTION MORNING

'The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.'—JOHN XX. 1-18.

JOHN'S purpose in his narrative of the resurrection is not only to establish the fact, but also to depict the gradual growth of faith in it, among the disciples. The two main incidents in this passage, the visit of Peter and John to the tomb and the appearance of our Lord to Mary, give the dawning of faith before

sight and the rapturous faith born of sight. In the remainder of the chapter are two more instances of faith following vision, and the teaching of the whole is summed up in Christ's words to the doubter, 'Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!'

I. The open sepulchre and the bewildered alarm it excited. The act of resurrection took place before sunrise. 'At midnight,' probably, 'the Bridegroom came.' It was fitting that He who was to scatter the darkness of the grave should rise while darkness covered the earth, and that no eye should behold 'how' that dead was 'raised up.' The earthquake and the descent of angels and the rolling away of the stone were after the tomb was empty.

John's note of time seems somewhat earlier than that of the other Gospels, but is not so much so as to require the supposition that Mary preceded the other women. She appears alone here, because the reason for mentioning her at all is to explain how Peter and John knew of the empty tomb, and she alone had been the informant. In these Eastern lands, 'as it began to dawn,' 'very early at the rising of the sun,' and 'while it was yet dark,' are times very near each other, and Mary may have reached the sepulchre a little before the others. Her own words, 'We know not,' show that she had spoken with others who had seen the empty grave. We must therefore suppose that she had with the others come to it, seen that the sacred corpse was gone and their spices useless, exchanged hurried words of alarm and bewilderment, and then had hastened away before the appearance of the angels.

The impulse to tell the leaders of the forlorn band

the news, which she thinks to be so bad, was womanly and natural. It was not hope, but wonder and sorrow that quickened her steps as she ran through the still morning to find them. Whether they were in one house or not is uncertain; but, at all events, Peter's denial had not cut him off from his brethren, and the two who were so constantly associated before and afterwards were not far apart that morning. The disciple who had stood by the Cross to almost the last had an open heart, and probably an open house for the denier. 'Restore such an one, . . . considering thyself.'

Mary had seen the tomb empty, and springs to the conclusion that 'they'—some unknown persons—have taken away the dead body, which, with clinging love that tries to ignore death, she still calls 'the Lord.' Possibly she may have thought that the resting-place in Joseph's new sepulchre was only meant for temporary shelter (ver. 15). At all events the corpse was gone, and the fact suggested no hope to her. How often do we, in like manner, misinterpret as dark what is really pregnant with light, and blindly attribute to 'them' what Jesus does! A tone of mind thus remote from anticipation of the great fact is a precious proof of the historical truth of the resurrection; for here was no soil in which hallucinations would spring, and such people would not have believed Him risen unless they had seen Him living.

II. Peter and John at the tomb, the dawning of faith, and the continuance of bewildered wonder. In the account, we may observe, first, the characteristic conduct of each of the two. Peter is first to set out, and John follows, both men doing according to their kind. The younger runs faster than his companion. He looked into the tomb, and saw the wrappings lying:

but the reverent awe which holds back finer natures kept him from venturing in. Peter is not said to have looked before entering. He loved with all his heart, but his love was impetuous and practical, and he went straight in, and felt no reason why he should pause. His boldness encouraged his friend, as the example of strong natures does. Some of my readers will recall Bushnell's noble sermon on 'Unconscious Influence' from this incident, and I need say no more about it.

Observe, too, the further witness of the folded grave-clothes. John from outside had not seen the napkin, lying carefully rolled up apart from the other cloths. It was probably laid in a part of the tomb invisible from without. But the careful disposal of these came to him, when he saw them, with a great flash of illumination. There had been no hurried removal.

Here had been no hostile hands, or there would not have been this deliberation; nor friendly hands, or there would not have been such dishonour to the sacred dead as to carry away the body nude. What did it mean? Could He Himself have done for Himself what He had bade them do for Lazarus? Could He have laid aside the garments of the grave as needing them no more? 'They have taken away'—what if it were not 'they' but He? No trace of hurry or struggle was there. He did 'not go out with haste, nor go by flight,' but calmly, deliberately, in the majesty of His lordship over death, He rose from His slumber and left order in the land of confusion.

Observe, too, the birth of the Apostle's faith. John connects it with the sight of the folded garments 'Believed' here must mean more than recognition of the fact that the grave was empty. The next clause seems to imply that it means belief in the resurrection

The scripture, which they 'knew' as scripture, was for John suddenly interpreted, and he was lifted out of the ignorance of its meaning, which till that moment he had shared with his fellow-disciples. Their failure to understand Christ's frequent distinct prophecies that He would rise again the third day has been thought incredible, but is surely intelligible enough if we remember how unexampled such a thing was, and how marvellous is our power of hearing and yet not hearing the plainest truth. We all in the course of our lives are lost in astonishment when things befall us which we have been plainly told will befall. The fulfilment of all divine promises (and threatenings) is a surprise, and no warnings beforehand teach one tithe so clearly as experience.

John believed, but Peter still was in the dark. Again the former had outrun his friend. His more sensitive nature, not to say his deeper love—for that would be unjust, since their love differed in quality more than in degree—had gifted him with a more subtle and swifter-working perception. Perhaps if Peter's heart had not been oppressed by his sin, he would have been readier to feel the sunshine of the wonderful hope. We condemn ourselves to the shade when we deny our Lord by deed or word.

III. The first appearance of the Lord, and revelation of the new form of intercourse. Nothing had been said of Mary's return to the tomb; but how could she stay away? The disciples might go, but she lingered, woman-like, to indulge in the bitter-sweet of tears. Eyes so filled are more apt to see angels. No wonder that these calm watchers, in their garb of purity and joy, had not been seen by the two men. The laws of such appearance are not those of ordinary optics

Spiritual susceptibility and need determine who shall see angels, and who shall see but the empty place. Wonder and adoration held these bright forms there. They had hovered over the cradle and stood by the shepherds at Bethlehem, but they bowed in yet more awestruck reverence at the grave, and death revealed to them a deeper depth of divine love.

The presence of angels was a trifle to Mary, who had only one thought—the absence of her Lord. Surely that touch in her unmoved answer, as if speaking to men, is beyond the reach of art. She says ‘*My Lord*’ now, and ‘*I know not,*’ but otherwise repeats her former words, unmoved by any hope caught from John. Her clinging love needed more than an empty grave and folded clothes and waiting angels to stay its tears, and she turned indifferently and wearily away from the interruption of the question to plunge again into her sorrow. Chrysostom suggests that she ‘turned herself,’ because she saw in the angels’ looks that they saw Christ suddenly appearing behind her; but the preceding explanation seems better. Her not knowing Jesus might be accounted for by her absorbing grief. One who looked at white-robed angels, and saw nothing extraordinary, would give but a careless glance at the approaching figure, and might well fail to recognise Him. But probably, as in the case of the two travellers to Emmaus, her ‘eyes were holden,’ and the cause of non-recognition was not so much a change in Jesus as an operation on her.

Be that as it may, it is noteworthy that His voice, which was immediately to reveal Him, at first suggested nothing to her; and even His gentle question, with the significant addition to the angels’ words, in ‘Whom seekest thou?’ which indicated His knowledge that

her tears fell for some person dear and lost, only made her think of Him as being 'the gardener,' and therefore probably concerned in the removal of the body. If He were so, He would be friendly; and so she ventured her pathetic petition, which does not name Jesus (so full is her mind of the One, that she thinks everybody must know whom she means), and which so overrated her own strength in saying, 'I will take Him away.' The first words of the risen Christ are on His lips yet to all sad hearts. He seeks our confidences, and would have us tell Him the occasions of our tears. He would have us recognise that all our griefs and all our desires point to one Person—Himself—as the one real Object of our 'seeking,' whom finding, we need weep no more.

Verse 16 tells us that Mary turned herself to see Him when He next spoke, so that, at the close of her first answer to Him, she must have once more resumed her gaze into the tomb, as if she despaired of the new-comer giving the help she had asked.

Who can say anything about that transcendent recognition, in which all the stooping love of the risen Lord is smelted into one word, and the burst of rapture, awe, astonishment, and devotion pours itself through the narrow channel of one other? If this narrative is the work of some anonymous author late in the second century, he is indeed a 'Great Unknown,' and has managed to imagine one of the two or three most pathetic 'situations' in literature. Surely it is more reasonable to suppose him no obscure genius, but a well-known recorder of what he had seen, and knew for fact. Christ's calling by name ever reveals His loving presence. We may be sure that He knows us by name, and we should reply by the same swift

cry of absolute submission as sprung to Mary's lips. 'Rabboni! Master!' is the fit answer to His call.

But Mary's exclamation was imperfect in that it expressed the resumption of no more than the old bond, and her gladness needed enlightenment. Things were not to be as they had been. Christ's 'Mary!' had indeed assured her of His faithful remembrance and of her present place in His love; but when she clung to His feet she was seeking to keep what she had to learn to give up. Therefore Jesus, who invited the touch which was to establish faith and banish doubt (Luke xxiv. 39; John xx. 27), bids her unclasp her hands, and gently instils the ending of the blessed past by opening to her the superior joys of the begun future. His words contain for us all the very heart of our possible relation to Him, and teach us that we need envy none who companied with Him here. His ascension to the Father is the condition of our truest approach to Him. His prohibition encloses a permission. 'Touch Me not! for I am not yet ascended,' implies 'When I am, you may.'

Further, the ascended Christ is still our Brother. Neither the mystery of death nor the impending mystery of dominion broke the tie. Again, the Resurrection is the beginning of Ascension, and is only then rightly understood when it is considered as the first upward step to the throne. 'I ascend,' not 'I have risen, and will soon leave you,' as if the Ascension only began forty days after on Olivet. It is already in process. Once more the ascended Christ, our Brother still, and capable of the touch of reverent love, is yet separated from us by the character, ever while united to us by the fact, of His filial and dependent relation to God. He cannot say 'Our Father'

as if standing on the common human ground. He is 'Son,' as we are not, and we are 'sons' through Him, and can only call God our Father because He is Christ's.

Such were the immortal hopes and new thoughts which Mary hastened from the presence of her recovered Lord to bring to the disciples. Fragrant though but partially understood, they were like half-opened blossoms from the tree of life planted in the midst of that garden, to bloom unfading, and ever disclosing new beauty in believing hearts till the end of time.

THE RISEN LORD'S CHARGE AND GIFT

'Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you : as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.'—JOHN XX. 21-23.

THE day of the Resurrection had been full of strange rumours, and of growing excitement. As evening fell, some of the disciples, at any rate, gathered together, probably in the upper room. They were brave, for in spite of the Jews they dared to assemble ; they were timid, for they barred themselves in 'for fear of the Jews.' No doubt in little groups they were eagerly discussing what had happened that day. Fuel was added to the fire by the return of the two from Emmaus. And then, at once, the buzz of conversation ceased, for 'He Himself, with His human air,' stood there in the midst, with the quiet greeting on His lips, which might have come from any casual stranger, and minimised the separation that was now ending : 'Peace be unto you !'

We have two accounts of that evening's interview

which remarkably supplement each other. They deal with two different parts of it. John begins where Luke ends. The latter Evangelist dwells mainly on the disciples' fears that it was some ghostly appearance that they saw, and on the removal of these by the sight, and perhaps the touch, of the hands and the feet. John says nothing of the terror, but Luke's account explains John's statement that 'He showed them His hands and His side,' and that, 'Then were the disciples glad,' the joy expelling the fear. Luke's account also, by dwelling on the first part of the interview, explains what else is unexplained in John's narrative, viz. the repetition of the salutation, 'Peace be unto you!' Our Lord thereby marked off the previous portion of the conversation as being separate, and a whole in itself. Their doubts were dissipated, and now something else was to begin. They who were sure of the risen Lord, and had had communion with Him, were capable of receiving a deeper peace, and so 'Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you!' and thereby inaugurated the second part of the interview.

Luke's account also helps us in another and very important way. John simply says that 'the disciples were gathered together,' and that might mean the Eleven only. Luke is more specific, and tells us what is of prime importance for understanding the whole incident, that 'the Eleven . . . and they that were with them' were assembled. This interview, the crown of the appearances on Easter Day, is marked as being an interview with the assembled body of disciples, whom the Lord, having scattered their doubts, and laid the deep benediction of His peace upon their hearts, then goes on to invest with a sacred mission, 'As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you'; to equip them with

the needed power, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'; and to unfold to them the solemn issues of their work, 'Whose sins ye remit they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain they are retained.' The message of that Easter evening is for us all; and so I ask you to look at these three points.

I. The Christian Mission.

I have already said that the clear understanding of the persons to whom the words were spoken, goes far to interpret the significance of the words. Here we have at the very beginning, the great thought that every Christian man and woman is sent by Jesus. The possession of what preceded this charge is the thing, and the only thing, that fits a man to receive it, and whoever possesses these is thereby despatched into the world as being Christ's envoy and representative. And what are these preceding experiences? The vision of the risen Christ, the touch of His hands, the peace that He breathed over believing souls, the gladness that sprang like a sunny fountain in the hearts that had been so dry and dark. Those things constituted the disciples' qualification for being sent, and these things were themselves—even apart from the Master's words—their sending out on their future life's-work. Thus, whoever—and thank God I am addressing many who come under the category!—whoever has seen the Lord, has been in touch with Him, and has felt his heart filled with gladness, is the recipient of this great commission. There is no question here of the prerogative of a class, nor of the functions of an order; it is a question of the universal aspect of the Christian life in its relation to the Master who sends, and the world into which it is sent.

We Nonconformists pride ourselves upon our freedom

from what we call 'sacerdotalism.' Ay! and we Nonconformists are quite willing to assert our priesthood in opposition to the claims of a class, and are as willing to forget it, should the question of the duties of the priest come into view. You do not believe in priests, but a great many of you believe that it is ministers that are 'sent,' and that you have no charge. Officialism is the dry-rot of all the Churches, and is found as rampant amongst democratic Nonconformists as amongst the more hierarchical communities. Brethren! you are included in Christ's words of sending on this errand, if you are included in this greeting of 'Peace be unto you!' 'I send,' not the clerical order, not the priest, but 'you,' because you have seen the Lord, and been glad, and heard the low whisper of His benediction creeping into your hearts.

Mark, too, how our Lord reveals much of Himself, as well as of our position, when He thus speaks. For He assumes here the royal tone, and claims to possess as absolute authority over the lives and work of all Christian people as the Father exercised when He sent the Son. But we must further ask ourselves the question, what is the parallel that our Lord here draws, not only between His action in sending us, and the Father's action in sending Him, but also between the attitude of the Son who was sent, and of the disciples whom He sends? And the answer is this—the work of Jesus Christ is continued by, prolonged in, and carried on henceforward through, the work that He lays upon His servants. Mark the exact expression that our Lord here uses. 'As My Father *hath* sent,' that is a past action, continuing its consequences in the present. It is not 'as My Father *did* send once,' but as 'My Father *hath* sent,' which means 'is also at present

sending,' and continues to send. Which being translated into less technical phraseology is just this, that we here have our Lord presenting to us the thought that, though in a new form, His work continues during the ages, and is now being wrought through His servants. What He does by another, He does by Himself. We Christian men and women do not understand our function in the world, unless we have realised this: 'Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ,' and His interests and His work are entrusted to our hands.

How shall the servants continue and carry on the work of the Master? The chief way to do it is by proclaiming everywhere that finished work on which the world's hopes depend. But note,—*'as My Father hath sent Me, so send I you,'*—then we are not only to carry on His work in the world, but if one might venture to say so, we are to reproduce His attitude towards God and the world. He was sent to be 'the Light of the world'; and so are we. He was sent to 'seek and to save that which was lost'; so are we. He was sent not to do His own will, but the will of the Father that sent Him; so are we. He took upon Himself with all cheerfulness the office to which He was appointed, and said, 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work'; and that must be our voice too. He was sent to pity, to look upon the multitudes with compassion, to carry to them the healing of His touch, and the sympathy of His heart; so must we. We are the representatives of Jesus Christ, and if I might dare to use such a phrase, He is to be incarnated again in the hearts, and manifested again in the lives, of His servants. Many weak eyes, that would be dazzled and hurt if they were to gaze on the sun, may look at the clouds cradled by its side, and dyed with its lustre. and

learn something of the radiance and the glory of the illuminating light from the illuminated vapour. And thus, 'as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.'

Now let us turn to

II. The Christian Equipment.

'He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost!' The symbolical action reminds us of the Creation story, when into the nostrils was breathed 'the breath of life, and man became a living soul.' The symbol is but a symbol, but what it teaches us is that every Christian man who has passed through the experiences which make him Christ's envoy, receives the equipment of a new life, and that that life is the gift of the risen Lord. This Prometheus came from the dead with the spark of life guarded in His pierced hands, and He bestowed it upon us; for the Spirit of life, which is the Spirit of Christ, is granted to all Christian men. Dear brethren! we have not lived up to the realities of our Christian confession, unless into our death has come, and there abides, this life derived from Jesus Himself, the communication of which goes along with all faith in Him.

But the gift which Jesus brought to that group of timid disciples in the upper room did not make superfluous the further gift on the day of Pentecost. The communication of the divine Spirit to men runs parallel with, depends on, and follows, the revelation of divine truth, so the ascended Lord gave more of that life to the disciples, who had been made capable of more of it by the fact of beholding His ascension, than the risen Lord could give on that Easter Day. But whilst thus there are measures and degrees, the life is given to every believer in correspondence with the clearness and the contents of his faith.

It is the power that will fit any of us for the work for which we are sent into the world. If we are here to represent Jesus Christ, and if it is true of us that 'as He is, so are we, in this world,' that likeness can only come about by our receiving into our spirits a kindred life which will effloresce and manifest itself to men in kindred beauty of foliage and of fruit. If we are to be 'the lights of the world,' our lamps must be fed with oil. If we are to be Christ's representatives, we must have Christ's life in us. Here, too, is the only source of strength and life to us Christian people, when we look at the difficulties of our task and measure our own feebleness against the work that lies before us. I suppose no man has ever tried honestly to be what Christ wished him to be amidst his fellows, whether as preacher or teacher or guide in any fashion, who has not hundreds of times clasped his hands in all but despair, and said, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' That is the temper into which the power will come. The rivers run in the valleys, and it is the lowly sense of our own unfitness for the task which yet presses upon us, and imperatively demands to be done, that makes us capable of receiving that divine gift.

It is for lack of it that so much of so-called 'Christian effort' comes to nothing. The priests may pile the wood upon the altar, and compass it all day long with vain cries, and nothing happens. It is not till the fire comes down from heaven that sacrifice and altar and wood and water in the trench, are licked up and converted into fiery light. So, dear brethren! it is because the Christian Church as a whole, and we as individual members of it, so imperfectly realise the A B C of our faith, our absolute dependence on the inbreathed life of Jesus Christ, to fit us for any of our work, that so

much of our work is ploughing the sands, and so often we labour for vanity and spend our strength for nought. What is the use of a mill full of spindles and looms until the fire-born impulse comes rushing through the pipes? Then they begin to move.

Let me remind you, too, that the words which our Lord here employs about these great gifts, when accurately examined, do lead us to the thought that we, even we, are not altogether passive in the reception of that gift. For the expression, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost' might, with more completeness of signification, be rendered, 'take ye the Holy Ghost.' True, the outstretched hand is nothing, unless the giving hand is stretched out too. True, the open palm and the clutching fingers remain empty, unless the open palm above drops the gift. But also true, things in the spiritual realm that are given have to be asked for, because asking opens the heart for their entrance. True, that gift was given once for all, and continuously, but the appropriation and the continual possession of it largely depend upon ourselves. There must be desire before there can be possession. If a man does not take his pitcher to the fountain the pitcher remains empty, though the fountain never ceases to spring. There must be taking by patient waiting. The old Friends had a lovely phrase when they spoke about 'waiting for the springing of the life.' If we hold out a tremulous hand, and our cup is not kept steady, the falling water will not enter it, and much will be spilt upon the ground. Wait on the Lord, and the life will rise like a tide in the heart. There must be a taking by the faithful use of what we possess. 'To him that hath shall be given.' There must be a taking by careful avoidance of what would hinder. In the winter weather the

water supply sometimes fails in a house. Why? Because there is a plug of ice in the service-pipe. Some of us have a plug of ice, and so the water has not come. 'Take the Holy Spirit!'

Now, lastly, we have here

III. The Christian power over sin.

I am not going to enter upon controversy. The words which close our Lord's great charge here have been much misunderstood by being restricted. It is eminently necessary to remember here that they were spoken to the whole community of Christian souls. The harm that has been done by their restriction to the so-called priestly function of absolution has been, not only the monstrous claims which have been thereon founded, but quite as much the obscuration of the large effects that follow from the Christian discharge by all believers of the office of representing Jesus Christ.

We must interpret these words in harmony with the two preceding points, the Christian mission and the Christian equipment. So interpreted, they lead us to a very plain thought which I may put thus. This same Apostle tells us in his letter that 'Jesus Christ was manifested to take away sin.' His work in this world, which we are to continue, was 'to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' We continue that work when,—as we have all, if Christians, the right to do—we lift up our voices with triumphant confidence, and call upon our brethren to 'behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!' The proclamation has a twofold effect, according as it is received or rejected; to him who receives it his sins melt away, and the preacher of forgiveness through Christ has the right to say to his brother, 'Thy sins are forgiven because

thou believest on Him.' The rejecter or the neglecter binds his sin upon himself by his rejection or neglect. The same message is, as the Apostle puts it, 'a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.' These words are the best commentary on this part of my text. The same heat, as the old Fathers used to say, 'softens wax and hardens clay.' The message of the word will either couch a blind eye, and let in the light, or draw another film of obscuration over the visual orb.

And so, Christian men and women have to feel that to them is entrusted a solemn message, that they walk in the world charged with a mighty power, that by the preaching of the Word, and by their own utterance of the forgiving mercy of the Lord Jesus, they may 'remit' or 'retain' not only the punishment of sin, but sin itself. How tender, how diligent, how reverent, how—not bowed down, but—erect under the weight of our obligations, we should be, if we realised that solemn thought!

THOMAS AND JESUS

'And after eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus.'—JOHN XX. 26.

THERE is nothing more remarkable about the narrative of the resurrection, taken as a whole, than the completeness with which our Lord's appearances met all varieties of temperament, condition, and spiritual standing. Mary, the lover; Peter, the penitent; the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, the thinkers; Thomas, the stiff unbeliever—the presence of the Christ is enough for them all; it cures those that need cure, and gladdens those that need gladdening. I am not going to do anything so foolish as to try to tell

over again, less vividly, this well-known story. We all remember its outlines, I suppose: the absence of Thomas from Christ's first meeting with the assembled disciples on Easter evening; the dogged disbelief with which he met their testimony; his arrogant assumption of the right to lay down the conditions on which he should believe, and Christ's gracious acceptance of the conditions; the discovery when they were offered that they were not needful; the burst of glad conviction which lifted him to the loftiest height reached while Christ was on earth, and then the summing up of all in our Lord's words—'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed!'—the last Beatitude, that links us and all the generations yet to come with the story, and is like a finger pointing to it, as containing very special lessons for them all.

I simply seek to try to bring out the force and instructiveness of the story. The first point is—

I. The isolation that misses the sight of the Christ.

'Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.' No reason is assigned. The absence may have been purely accidental, but the specification of Thomas as 'one of the Twelve,' seems to suggest that his absence was regarded by the Evangelist as a dereliction of apostolic duty; and the cause of it may be found, I think, with reasonable probability, if we take into account the two other facts that the same Evangelist records concerning this Apostle. One is his exclamation, in which a constitutional tendency to accept the blackest possibilities as certainties, blends very strangely and beautifully with an intense and brave devotion to his Master. 'Let us also go,' said Thomas, when Christ announced His intention, but a few days before the Passion, of returning to the grave

of Lazarus, 'that we may die with Him.' 'He is going to His death, that I am sure of, and I am going to be beside Him even in His death.' A constitutional pessimist! The only other notice that we have of him is that he broke in—with apparent irreverence which was not real,—with a brusque contradiction of Christ's saying that they knew the way, and they knew His goal. 'Lord! we know not whither Thou goest'—there spoke pained love fronting the black prospect of eternal separation,—'and how can we know the way?'—there spoke almost impatient despair.

So is not that the kind of man who on the Resurrection day would have been saying to himself, even more decidedly and more bitterly than the two questioning thinkers on the road to Emmaus had said it, 'We trusted that this had been He, but it is all over now'? The keystone was struck out of the arch, and this brick tumbled away of itself. The hub was taken out of the wheel, and the spokes fell apart. The divisive tendency was begun, as I have had occasion to remark in other sermons. Thomas did the very worst thing that a melancholy man can do, went away to brood in a corner by himself, and so to exaggerate all his idiosyncrasies, to distort the proportion of truth, to hug his despair, by separating himself from his fellows. Therefore he lost what they got, the sight of the Lord. He 'was not with them when Jesus came.' Would he not have been better in the upper room than gloomily turning over in his mind the dissolution of the fair company and the shipwreck of all his hopes?

May we not learn a lesson? I venture to apply these words, dear friends, to our gatherings for worship. The worst thing that a man can do when disbelief, or doubt,

or coldness shrouds his sky, and blots out the stars, is to go away alone and shut himself up with his own, perhaps morbid, or, at all events, disturbing thoughts. The best thing that he can do is to go amongst his fellows. If the sermon does not do him any good, the prayers and the praises and the sense of brotherhood will help him. If a fire is going out, draw the dying coals close together, and they will make each other break into a flame. One great reason for some of the less favourable features that modern Christianity presents, is that men are beginning to think less than they ought to do, and less than they used to do, of the obligation and the blessing, whatever their spiritual condition, of gathering together for the worship of God. But, further, there is a far wider thought than that here, which I have already referred to, and which I do not need to dwell upon, namely, that, although, of course, there are very plain limits to be put to the principle, yet it is a principle, that solitude is not the best medicine for any disturbed or saddened soul. It is true that 'solitude is the mother-country of the strong,' and that unless we are accustomed to live very much alone, we shall not live very much with God. But on the other hand, if you cut yourself off from the limiting, and therefore developing, society of your fellows, you will rust, you will become what they call eccentric. Your idiosyncrasies will swell into monstrosities, your peculiarities will not be subjected to the gracious process of pruning which society with your fellows, and especially with Christian hearts, will bring to them. And in every way you will be more likely to miss the Christ than if you were kindly with your kind, and went up to the house of God in company.

Take the next point that is here :

II. The stiff incredulity that prescribed terms.

When Thomas came back to his brethren, they met him with the witness that they had seen the Lord, and he met them as they had met the witnesses that brought the same message to them. They had thought the women's words 'idle tales.' Thomas gives them back their own incredulity. I need not remind you of what I have already had occasion to say, how much this frank acknowledgment that none of these, who were afterwards to be witnesses of the Resurrection to the world, accepted testimony to the Resurrection as enough to convince them, enhances the worth of their testimony, and how entirely it shatters the conception that the belief in the Resurrection was a mist that rose from the undrained swamps of their own heated imaginations.

But notice how Thomas exaggerated their position, and took up a far more defiant tone than any of them had done. He is called 'doubting Thomas.' He was no doubter. Flat, frank, dogged disbelief, and not hesitation or doubt, was his attitude. The very form in which he puts his requirement shows how he was hugging his unbelief, and how he had no idea that what he asked would ever be granted. 'Unless I have so-and-so I will not,' indicates an altogether spiritual attitude from what 'If I have so-and-so, I will,' would have indicated. The one is the language of willingness to be persuaded, the other is a token of a determination to be obstinate. What right had he—what right has any man—to say, 'So-and-so must be made plain to me, or I will not accept a certain truth'? You have a right to ask for satisfactory evidence; you have no right to make up your minds beforehand what that must necessarily be. Thomas showed his hand not

only in the form of his expression, not only in his going beyond his province and prescribing the terms of surrender, but also in the terms which he prescribed. True, he is only saying to the other Apostles, 'I will give in if I have what you had,' for Jesus Christ had said to them, 'Handle Me and see!' But although thus they could say nothing in opposition, it is clear that he was asking more than was needful, and more than he had any right to ask. And he shows his hand, too, in another way. 'I will not believe!'—what business had he, what business have you, to bring any question of will into the act of belief or credence? Thus, in all these four points, the form of the demand, the fact of the demand, the substance of the demand, and the implication in it that to give or withhold assent was a matter to be determined by inclination, this man stands not as an example of a doubter, but as an example, of which there are too many copies amongst us always, of a determined disbeliever and rejecter.

So I come to the third point, and that is:

III. The revelation that turned the denier into a rapturous confessor.

What a strange week that must have been between the two Sundays—that of the Resurrection and the next! Surely it would have been kinder if the Christ had not left the disciples, with their new-found, tremulous, raw conviction. It would have been less kind if He had been with them, for there is nothing that is worse for the solidity of a man's spiritual development than that it should be precipitated, and new thoughts must have time to take the shape of the mind into which they come, and to mould the shape of the mind into which they come. So they were left to quiet reflection, to meditation, to adjust their thoughts, to get to under-

stand the bearings of the transcendent fact. And as a mother will go a little way off from her little child, in order to encourage it to try to walk, they were left alone to make experiments of that self-reliance which was also reliance on Him, and which was to be their future and their permanent condition. So the week passed, and they became steadier and quieter, and began to be familiar with the thought, and to see some glimpses of what was involved in the mighty fact, of a risen Saviour. Then He comes back again, and when He comes He singles out the unbeliever, leaving the others alone for the moment, and He gives him back, granted, his arrogant conditions. How much ashamed of them Thomas must have been when he heard them quoted by the Lord's own lips! How different they would sound from what they had sounded when, in the self-sufficiency of his obstinate determination, he had blurted them out in answer to his brethren's testimony! There is no surer way of making a good man ashamed of his wild words than just to say them over again to him when he is calm and cool. Christ's granting the request was Christ's sharpest rebuke of the request. But there was not only the gracious and yet chastising granting of the foolish desire, but there was a penetrating warning: 'Be not faithless, but believing.' What did that mean? Well, it meant this: 'It is not a question of evidence, Thomas; it is a question of disposition. Your incredulity is not due to your not having enough to warrant your belief, but to your tendency and attitude of mind and heart.' There is light enough in the sun; it is our eyes that are wrong, and deep below most questions, even of intellectual credence, lies the disposition of the man. The ultimate truths of religion

cannot be matters of demonstration any more than the fundamental truths of any science can be proved; any more than Euclid's axioms can be demonstrated; any more than the sense of beauty or the ear for music depend on the understanding. 'Be not faithless, but believing.' The eye that is sound will see the light.

And there is another lesson here. The words of our Lord, literally rendered, are, 'become not faithless, but believing.' There are two tendencies at work with us, and the one or the other will progressively lay hold upon us, and we shall increasingly yield to it. You can cultivate the habit of incredulity until you descend into the class of the faithless; or you can cultivate the opposite habit and disposition until you rise to the high level of a settled and sovereign belief.

It is clear that Thomas did not reach forth his hand and touch. The rush of instantaneous conviction swept him along and bore him far away from the state of mind which had asked for such evidence. Our Lord's words must have pierced his heart, as he thought: 'Then He was here all the while; He heard my wild words; He loves me still.' As Nathanael, when he knew that Jesus had seen him under the fig-tree, broke out with the exclamation, 'Rabbi! Thou art the Son of God,' so Thomas, smitten as by a lightning flash with the sense of Jesus' all-embracing knowledge and all-forgiving love, forgets his incredulity and breaks into the rapturous confession, the highest ever spoken while He was on earth: 'My Lord and my God!' So swiftly did his whole attitude change. It was as when the eddying volumes of smoke in some great conflagration break into sudden flame, the ruddier and hotter, the blacker they were. Sight may have made Thomas

believe that Jesus was risen, but it was something other and more inward than sight that opened his lips to cry, 'My Lord and my God!' Finally, we note—

IV. A last Beatitude that extends to all generations.

'Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.' I need not do more than just in a sentence remind you that we shall very poorly understand either this saying or this Gospel or the greater part of the New Testament, if we do not make it very clear to our minds that 'believing' is not credence only but trust. The object of the Christian's faith is not a proposition; it is not a dogma nor a truth, but a Person. And the act of faith is not an acceptance of a given fact, a Resurrection or any other, as true, but it is a reaching out of the whole nature to Him and a resting upon Him. I have said that Thomas had no right to bring his will to bear on the act of belief, considered as the intellectual act of accepting a thing as true. But Christian faith, being more than intellectual belief, does involve the activity of the will. Credence is the starting-point, but it is no more. There may be belief in the truth of the gospel and not a spark of faith in the Christ revealed by the gospel.

Even in regard to that lower kind of belief, the assent which does not rest on sense has its own blessing. We sometimes are ready to think that it would have been easier to believe if 'we had seen with our eyes, and our hands had handled the (incarnate) Word of Life,' but that is a mistake.

This generation, and all generations that have not seen Him, are not in a less advantageous position in regard either to credence or to trust, than were those that companied with Him on earth, and the blessing which He breathed out in that upper room comes

floating down the ages like a perfume diffused through the atmosphere, and is with us fragrant as it was in the 'days of His flesh.' There is nothing in the world's history comparable to the warmth and closeness of conscious contact with that Christ, dead for nearly nineteen centuries now, which is the experience to-day of thousands of Christian men and women. All other names pass, and as they recede through the ages, thickening veils of oblivion, mists of forgetfulness, gather round them. They melt away into the fog and are forgotten. Why is it that one Person, and one Person only, triumphs even in this respect over space and time, and is the same close Friend with whom millions of hearts are in loving touch, as He was to those that gathered around Him upon earth?

What is the blessing of this faith that does not rest on sense, and only in a small measure on testimony or credence? Part of its blessing is that it delivers us from the tyranny of sense, sets us free from the crowding oppression of 'things seen and temporal'; draws back the veil and lets us behold 'the things that are unseen and eternal.' Faith is sight, the sight of the inward eye. It is the direct perception of the unseen. It sees Him who is invisible. The vision which is given to the eye of faith is more real in the true sense of that word, more substantial in the true sense of that word, more reliable and more near than that sight by which the bodily eye beholds external things. We see, when we trust, greater things than when we look. The blessing of blessings is that the faith which triumphs over the things seen and temporal, brings into every life the presence of the unseen Lord.

Brethren! do not confound credence with trust. Remember that trust does involve an element of will

Ask yourselves if the things seen and temporal are great enough, lasting enough, real enough to satisfy you, and then remember whose lips said, 'Become not faithless but believing,' and breathed His last Beatitude upon those 'who have not seen and yet have believed.' We may all have that blessing lying like dew upon us, amidst the dust and scorching heat of the things seen and temporal. We shall have it, if our heart's trust is set on Him, whom one of the listeners on that Sunday spoke of long after, in words which seem to echo that promise, as 'Jesus in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.'

THE SILENCE OF SCRIPTURE

'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.'—JOHN XX. 30, 31.

It is evident that these words were originally the close of this Gospel, the following chapter being an appendix, subsequently added by the writer himself. In them we have the Evangelist's own acknowledgment of the incompleteness of his Gospel, and his own statement of the purpose which he had in view in composing it. That purpose was first of all a doctrinal one, and he tells us that in carrying it out he omitted many things that he could have put in if he had chosen. But that doctrinal purpose was subordinate to a still further aim. His object was not only to present the truth that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, but to present it

in such a way as to induce his readers to believe in that Christ. And he desired that they might have faith in order that they might have life.

Now, it is a very good old canon in judging of a book that 'in every work' we are to 'regard the writer's end,' and if that simple principle had been applied to this Gospel, a great many of the features in it which have led to some difficulty would have been seen to be naturally explained by the purpose which the Evangelist had in view.

But this text may be applied very much more widely than to John's Gospel. We may use it to point our thoughts to the strange silences and incompletenesses of the whole of Revelation, and to the explanation of these incompletenesses by the consideration of the purpose which it all had in view. In that sense I desire to look at these words before us.

I. First, then, we have here set forth the incompleteness of Scripture.

Take this Gospel first. Anybody who looks at it can see that it is a fragment. It is not meant to be a biography; it is avowedly a selection, and a selection under the influence, as I shall have to show you presently, of a distinct dogmatic purpose. There is nothing in it about Christ's birth, nothing in it about His baptism, nor about His selection of His Apostles. There is scarcely anything about the facts of His outward life at all. There is scarcely a word about the whole of His ministry in Galilee. There is not one of His parables, there are only seven of His miracles before the Resurrection, and two of these occur also in the other Evangelists. There is scarcely any of His ethical teaching; there is not a word about the Lord's Supper.

And so I might go on enumerating many remarkable gaps in this Gospel. Nearly half of it is taken up with the incidents of one week at the end of His life, and the incidents of and after the Resurrection. Of the remainder—by far the larger portion consists of several conversations which are hung upon miracles that seem to be related principally for the sake of these. The whole of the phenomena show us at once the fragmentary character of this Gospel as stamped upon the very surface.

And when we turn to the other three, the same thing is true, though less strikingly so. Why was it that in the Church, after the completion of the Scriptural canon, there sprang up a whole host of Apocryphal Gospels, full of childish stories of events which people felt had been passed over with strange silence, in the teachings of the four Evangelists: stories of His childhood, for instance, and stories about what happened between His death and His resurrection? A great many miracles were added to those that have been told us in Scripture. The condensed hints of the canonical Gospels received a great expansion, which indicated how much their silence about certain points had been felt. What a tiny pamphlet they make! Is it not strange that the greatest event in the world's history should be told in such brief outline, and that here, too, the mustard seed, 'less than the least of all seeds,' should have become such a great tree? Put the four Gospels down by the side of the two thick octavo volumes, which it is the regulation thing to write nowadays, as the biography of any man that has a name at all, and you will feel their incompleteness as biographies. They are but a pen-and-ink drawing of the Sun! And yet, although they be so tiny that you might sit down and read them

all in an evening over the fire, is it not strange that they have stamped on the mind of the world an image so deep and so sharp, of such a character as the world never saw elsewhere? They are fragments, but they have left a symmetrical and an unique impression on the consciousness of the whole world.

And then, if you turn to the whole Book, the same thing is true, though in a modified sense there. I have no time to dwell upon that fruitful field, but the silence of Scripture is quite as eloquent as its speech. Think, for instance, of how many things in the Bible are taken for granted which one would not expect to be taken for granted in a book of religious instruction. It takes for granted the being of a God. It takes for granted our relations to Him. It takes for granted our moral nature. In its later portions, at all events, it takes for granted the future life. Look at how the Bible, as a whole, passes by, without one word of explanation or alleviation, a great many of the difficulties which gather round some of its teaching. For instance, we find no attempt to explain the divine nature of our Lord; or the existence of the three Persons in the Godhead. It has not a word to say in explanation of the mystery of prayer; or of the difficulty of reconciling the Omnipotent will of God on the one hand, with our own free will on the other. It has not a word to explain, though many a word to proclaim and enforce, the fact of Christ's death as the atonement for the sins of the whole world. Observe, too, how scanty the information on points on which the heart craves for more light. How closely, for instance, the veil is kept over the future life! How many questions which are not prompted by mere curiosity, our sorrow and our love ask in vain!

Nor is the incompleteness of Scripture as a historical book less marked. Nations and men appear on its pages abruptly, rending the curtain of oblivion, and striding to the front of the stage for a moment, and then they disappear, swallowed up of night. It has no care to tell the stories of any of its heroes, except for so long as they were the organs of that divine breath, which, breathed through the weakest reed, makes music. The self-revelation of God, not the acts and fortunes of even His noblest servants, is the theme of the Book. It is full of gaps about matters that any sciolist or philosopher or theologian would have filled up for it. There it stands, a Book unique in the world's history, unique in what it says, and no less unique in what it does not say.

'Many other things truly did' that divine Spirit in His march through the ages, 'which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe.'

II. And so that brings me next to say a word or two about the more immediate purpose which explains all these gaps and incompletenesses.

John's Gospel, and the other three Gospels, and the whole Bible, New Testament and Old, have this for their purpose, to produce in men's hearts the faith in Jesus as 'the Christ' and as 'the Son of God.'

I need not speak at length about this one Gospel with any special regard to that thought. I have already said that the Evangelist avows that his work is a selection, that he declares that the purpose that determined his selection was doctrinal, and that he picked out facts which would tend to represent Jesus Christ to us in the twofold capacity,—as the Christ, the Fulfiller of all the expectations and promises of the

Old Covenant, and as the Son of God. The one of these titles is a name of office, the other a name of nature; the one declares that He had come to be, and to do, all to which types and prophecies and promises had dimly pointed, and the other declares that He was 'the Eternal Word,' which 'in the beginning was with God and was God,' and was manifest here upon earth to us.

This was his purpose, and this representation of Jesus Christ is that which shapes all the facts and all the phenomena of this Gospel, from the very first words of it to its close.

And so, although it is wide from my present subject, I may just make one parenthetical remark, to the effect that it is ridiculous in the face of this statement for 'critics' to say, as some of them do: 'The author of the fourth Gospel has not told us this, that, and the other incident in Christ's life, therefore, he did not know it.' Then some of them will draw the conclusion that John's Gospel is not to be trusted in the given case, because he does not give us a certain incident, and others might draw the conclusion that the other three Evangelists are not to be trusted because they do give it us. And the whole fabric is built up upon a blunder, and would have been avoided if people had listened when John said to them: 'I knew a great many things about Jesus Christ, but I did not put them down here because I was not writing a biography, but preaching a gospel; and what I wanted to proclaim was that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.'

But now we may extend that a great deal further. It is just as true about the whole New Testament. The four Gospels are written to tell us these two facts about Christ. They are none of them merely bio-

graphies; as such they are singularly deficient, as we have seen. But they are biographies *plus* a doctrine; and the biography is told mainly for the sake of carrying this twofold truth into men's understandings and hearts, that Jesus is, first of all, the Christ, and second, the Son of God.

And then comes the rest of the New Testament, which is nothing more than the working out of the theoretical and practical consequence of these great truths. All the Epistles, the Book of Revelation, and the history of the Church, as embodied in the Acts of the Apostles,—all these are but the consequences of that fundamental truth: and the whole of Scripture in its later portions is but the drawing of the inferences and the presenting of the duties that flow from the facts that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.'

And what about the Old Testament? Why, this about it: that whatever may be the conclusion as to the date and authorship of any of the books in it,—and I am not careful to contend about these at present;—and whatever a man may believe about the verbal prophecies which most of us recognise there,—there is stamped unmistakably upon the whole system, of which the Old Testament is the record, an onward-looking attitude. It is all anticipatory of 'good things to come,' and of a Person who will bring them. Sacrifice, sacred offices, such as priesthood and kingship, and the whole history of Israel, have their faces turned to the future. 'They that went before, and they that followed after, cried "Hosanna! Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"' This Christ towers up above the history of the world and the process of revelation, like Mount Everest among the Himalayas. To that great

peak all the country on the one side runs upwards, and from it all the valleys on the other descend; and the springs are born there which carry verdure and life over the world.

Christ, the Son of God, is the centre of Scripture; and the Book—whatever be the historical facts about its origin, its authorship, and the date of the several portions of which it is composed—the Book is a unity, because there is driven right through it, like a core of gold, either in the way of prophecy and onward-looking anticipation, or in the way of history and grateful retrospect, the reference to the one ‘Name that is above every name,’ the name of the Christ, the Son of God.

And all its incompleteness, its fragmentariness, its carelessness about persons, are intended, as are the slight parts in a skilful artist’s handiwork, to emphasise the beauty and the sovereignty of that one central Figure on which all lights are concentrated, and on which the painter has lavished all the resources of his art. So God—for *God* is the Author of the Bible—on this great canvas has painted much in sketchy outline, and left much unfilled in, that every eye may be fixed on the central Figure, the Christ of God, on whose head comes down the Dove, and round whom echoes the divine declaration: ‘This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’

But it is not merely in order to represent Jesus as the Christ of God that these things are written, but it is that that representation may become the object of our faith. If the intention of Scripture had been simply to establish the fact that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God, it might have been done in a very different fashion. A theological treatise would have been enough

to do that. But if the object be that men should not only accept with their understandings the truth concerning Christ's office and nature, but that their hearts should go out to Him, and that they should rest their sinful souls upon Him as the Son of God and the Christ, then there is no other way to accomplish that, but by the history of His life and the manifestation of His heart. If the object were simply to make us know about Christ, we do not need a Book like this; but if the object is to lead us to put our faith in Him, then we must have what we have here, the infinitely touching and tender Figure of Jesus Christ Himself, set before us in all its sweetness and beauty as He lived and moved and died for us.

And so, dear friends, let me put one last word here about this part of my subject. If this be the purpose of Scripture, then let us learn on the one hand the wretched insufficiency of a mere orthodox creed, and let us learn on the other hand the equal insufficiency of a mere creedless emotion.

If the purpose of Scripture, in these Gospels, and all its parts, is that we should believe 'that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,' that purpose is not accomplished when we simply yield our understanding to that truth and accept it as a great many people do. That was much more the fault of the last generation than of this, though many of us may still make the mistake of supposing that we are Christians because we idly assent to—or, at least, do not deny, and so fancy that we accept—Christian truth. But, as Luther says in one of his rough figures, 'Human nature is like a drunken peasant; if you put him up on the horse on the one side, he is sure to tumble down on the other.' And so the reaction from the heartless, unpractical

orthodoxy of half a century ago has come with a vengeance to-day, when everybody is saying, 'Oh! give me a Christianity without dogma!' Well, I say that too, about a great many of the metaphysical subtleties which have been called Doctrinal Christianity. But this doctrine of the nature and office of Jesus Christ cannot be given up, and the Christianity which Christ and His Apostles taught be retained. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Do you trust your soul to Him in these characters? If you do, I think we can shake hands. If you do not, Scripture has failed to do its work on you, and you have not reached the point which all God's lavish revelation has been expended on the world that you and all men might attain.

III. Now, lastly, notice the ultimate purpose of the whole.

Scripture is not given to us merely to make us know something about God in Christ, nor only in order that we may have faith in the Christ thus revealed to us, but for a further end—great, glorious, but, blessed be His Name! not distant—namely, that we may 'have life in His name.' 'Life' is deep, mystical, inexplicable by any other words than itself. It includes pardon, holiness, well-being, immortality, Heaven; but it is more than they all.

This life comes into our dead hearts and quickens them by union with God. That which is joined to God lives. Each being according to its nature, is, on condition of the divine power acting upon it. This bit of wood upon which I put my hand, and the hand which I put upon it, would equally crumble into nothingness if they were separated from God.

You can separate your wills and your spiritual nature

from Him, and thus separated you are 'dead in trespasses and in sins.' And, O brother! the message comes to you: there is life in that great Christ, 'in His name'; that is to say, in that revealed character of His by which He is made known to us as the Christ and the Son of God.

Union with Him in His Sonship will bring life into dead hearts. He is the true 'Prometheus' who has come from Heaven with 'fire,' the fire of the divine Life in the 'reed' of His humanity, and He imparts it to us all if we will. He lays Himself upon us, as the prophet laid himself on the little child in the upper chamber; and lip to lip, and beating heart to dead heart, He touches our death, and it is quickened into life.

The condition on which that great Name will bring to us life is simply our faith. Do you believe in Him, and trust yourself to Him, as He who came to fulfil all that prophet, priest, and king, sacrifice, altar, and Temple of old times prophesied and looked for? Do you trust in Him as the Son of God who comes down to earth that we in Him might find the immortal life which He is ready to give? If you do, then, dear brethren! the end that God has in view in all His revelation, that Christ had in view in His bitter Passion, has been accomplished for you. If you do not it has not. You may admire Him, you may think loftily of Him, you may be ready to call Him by many great and appreciative names, but Oh! unless you have learned to see in Him the divine Saviour of your souls, you have not seen what God means you to see.

But if you have, then all other questions about this Book, important as they are in their places, may settle themselves as they will; you have got the kernel, the thing that it was meant to bring you. Many an erudite

scholar, who has studied the Bible all his life, has missed the purpose for which it was given; and many a poor old woman in her garret has found it. It is not meant to wrangle over, it is not meant to be read as an interesting product of the religious consciousness, it is not to be admired as all that remains of the literature of a nation that had a genius for religion; but it is to be taken as being God's great Word to the world, the record of the revelation that He has given us in His Son. The Eternal Word is the theme of all the written word. Have you made the jewel which is brought us in that casket your own? Is Jesus to you the Son of the living God, believing on whom you share His life, and become 'sons of God' by Him? Can you take on to your thankful lips that triumphant and rapturous confession of the doubting Thomas,—the flag flying on the completed roof-tree of this Gospel—'My Lord and my God'? If you can, you will receive the blessing which Christ then promised to all of us standing beyond the limits of that little group, 'who have not seen and yet have believed'—even that eternal life which flows into our dead spirits from the Christ, the Son of God, who is the Light of the world, and the Life of men.

AN ELOQUENT CATALOGUE

'There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples.'—JOHN xxi. 2

THIS chapter, containing the infinitely significant and pathetic account of our Lord's appearance to these disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, is evidently an appendix to the Gospel of John. The design of that Gospel is

complete with the previous chapter. and there is a formal close, as of the whole book, at the end thereof. But whilst obviously an appendix, this chapter is as obviously the work of the same hand as wrote the Gospel. There are many minute points of identity between the style of it and of the rest of the work, so that there can be no difficulty or doubt as to whence it came. This enumeration of these seven disciples, regarded as being the work of John himself, seems to me to be significant, and to contain a good many lessons. And I desire to turn to these now.

I. First of all, the fact that they were together is significant.

How did they come to hold together? How had they not yielded to the temptation to seek safety by flight, which would have been the natural course after the death of their Leader on a charge of treason against the Roman power? The process of disintegration had begun, and we see it going on in the conduct of the disciples before the Resurrection. The 'Shepherd was smitten,' and, as a matter of course, 'the sheep' began to 'scatter.' And yet here we find them back in Galilee, in their old haunts, and not trying to escape by separation, which would have been the first step suggested to ordinary men in an ordinary state of things. But where everybody knew them, and they knew everybody, and everybody knew them to be disciples of Jesus Christ, thither they go, and hold together as if they had still a living centre and a uniting bond. How did that come about? The fact that after Christ's death there was a group of men united together simply and solely as disciples, and exhibiting their unity as disciples conspicuously, in the face of the men that knew them best, this forms a

strange phenomenon that needs an explanation. And there is only one explanation of it, that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. That drew them together once more. You cannot build a Church on a dead Christ; and of all the proofs of the Resurrection, I take it that there is none that it is harder for an unbeliever to account for, in harmony with his hypothesis, than the simple fact that Christ's disciples held together after He was dead, and presented a united front to the world.

So, then, the fact of the group is itself significant, and we may claim it as being a morsel of evidence for the historical veracity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

II. Then the composition of this group is significant.

Taken in comparison with the original nucleus of the Church, the calling of which we find recorded in the first chapter of this Gospel, it is to be noticed that of the five men who made the Primitive Church, there are three who reappear here by name—viz. Simon Peter, John and Nathanael, and Nathanael never appears anywhere else except in these two places. Then, note that there are two unnamed men here, 'two other of His disciples'; who, I think, in all probability are the two of the original five that we do not find named here—viz. 'Philip and Andrew, Simon Peter's brother'—both of them connected with Bethsaida, the place where probably this appearance of the risen Lord took place.

So, then, I think, the fair inference from the list before us is that we have here the original nucleus again, the first five, with a couple more, and the couple more are 'Thomas, who is called Didymus'—and we shall see the reason for *his* presence in a

moment—and the brother of John, one of the first pair.

Thus, then, to the original little group that had gathered round Him at the first, and to whom He had been so often manifested in this very scene where they were standing now, He is revealed again. There, along the beach, is the place where James and John and Simon and Andrew were called from their nets three short years ago. Across yonder, on the other side of the lake, is the bit of green grass where the thousands were fed. Behind it is the steep slope down which the devil-possessed herd rushed. There, over the shoulder of the hill, is the road that leads up to Cana of Galilee, which they had trod together on that never-to-be-forgotten first morning, and from which little village one of the group came. They who had accompanied with Him all the time of His too short fellowship, and had seen all His manifestations, were fittingly chosen to be the recipients of this last appearance, which was to be full of instruction as to the work of the Church, its difficulties, its discouragements, its rewards, its final success, and His benediction of it until the very end of time. It was not for nothing that they who were gathered together were that first nucleus of the Church, who received again from their Master the charge to be ‘fishers of men.’

And then, if we look at the list, having regard to the history of those that make it up, it seems to me that that also brings us some valuable considerations. Foremost stand, as receiving this great manifestation of Jesus Christ, the two greatest sinners of the whole band, ‘Simon Peter, and Thomas, which is called Didymus,’ the denier and the doubter. Singularly contrasted these two men were in much of their dis-

position; and yet alike in the fact that the Crucifixion had been too much for their faith. The one of them was impetuous, the other of them slow. The one was always ready to say more than he meant; the other always ready to do more than he said. The one was naturally despondent, disposed to look ahead and to see the gloomiest side of everything—'Let us also go that we may die with Him'—the other never looking an inch beyond his nose, and always yielding himself up to the impulse of the moment. And yet both of them were united in this, that the one, from a sudden wave of cowardice which swept him away from his deepest convictions and made him for an hour untrue to his warmest love, and the other, from giving way to his constitutional tendency to despondency, and to taking the blackest possible view of everything—they had both of them failed in their faith, the one turning out a denier and the other turning out a doubter. And yet here they are, foremost upon the list of those who saw the Risen Christ.

Well, there are two lessons there, and the one is this—let us Christian people learn with what open hearts and hands we should welcome a penitent when he comes back. The other is,—let us learn who they are to whom Jesus Christ deigns to manifest Himself—not immaculate monsters, but men that, having fallen, have learned humility and caution, and by penitence have risen to a securer standing, and have turned even their transgressions into steps in the ladder that lifts them to Christ. It was something that the first to whom the risen Saviour appeared when He came victorious and calm from the grave, was the woman 'out of whom He had cast seven devils,' and the blessed truth which that teaches is the same as that which is

to be drawn from this list of those whom He regarded, and whom we regard, as then constituting the true nucleus of His Church—a list which is headed by the blackest denier and the most obstinate and captious sceptic in the whole company. ‘There were together Simon Peter and Thomas, which is called Didymus,’ and the little group was glad to have them, and welcomed them, as it becomes us to welcome brethren who have fallen, and who come again saying, ‘I repent.’

Well, then, take the next: he was ‘Nathanael, of Cana in Galilee’; a guileless ‘Israelite indeed,’ so swift to believe, so ready with his confession, so childlike in his wonder, so ardent in his love and faith. The only thing that Christ is recorded as having said to him is this: ‘Because I said . . . believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.’ A promise of growing clearness of vision and growing fullness of manifestation was made to this man, who never appears anywhere else in Scripture but in these two scenes, and so may stand to us as the type of the opposite kind of Christian experience from that stormy one of the doubter and the denier—viz. that of persistent, quiet, continuous growth, which is marked by faithful use of the present amount of illumination, and is rewarded by a continual increase of the same. If the keynote to the two former lives is, that sin confessed helps a man to climb, the keynote to this man’s is the other truth, that they are still more blessed who, with no interruptions, backslidings, inconsistencies, or denials, by patient continuousness in well-doing, widen the horizon of their Christian vision and purge their eyesight for daily larger knowledge. To these, as to the others, there is granted the vision of the risen Lord, and to them also is entrusted the care of His sheep and His lambs.

We do not *need* to go away into the depths and the darkness in order to realise the warmth and the blessedness of the light. There is no *necessity* that any Christian man's career should be broken by denials like Peter's or by doubts like Thomas's, but we may 'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.' 'So is the kingdom of heaven, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.'

Then, still further, there were here 'the two sons of Zebedee.' These were the men of whom the Master said that they were 'sons of thunder,' who, by natural disposition, in so far as they resembled one another (which they seem to have done), were eager, energetic, somewhat bigoted, ready with passionate rebukes, and not unwilling to invoke destructive vengeance, all for the love of Him. They were also touched with some human ambition which led them to desire a place at His right hand and His left, but the ambition, too, was touched with love towards Him, which half redeemed it. But by dwelling with Him one of them, at least, had become of all the group the likeliest his Master. And the old monastic painters taught a very deep truth when, in their pictures of the apostles, they made John's almost a copy of the Master's face. To him, too, there was granted in like manner a place amongst this blessed company, and it is surely a trace of *his* hand that his place should seem so humble. Any other but himself would certainly have put James and John in their natural place beside Peter. It must have been himself who slipped himself and his brother into so inconspicuous a position in the list, and further veiled his personality under the patronymic, 'the sons of Zebedee.'

Last of all come 'two other of His disciples,' not

worth naming. Probably, as I have said, they were the missing two out of the five of the first chapter; but possibly they were only 'disciples' in the wider sense, and not of the Apostolic group at all. Nobody can tell. What does it matter? The lesson to be gathered from their presence in this group is one that most of us may very well take to heart. There is a place for commonplace, undistinguished people, whose names are not worth repeating in any record; there is a place for us one-talented folk, in Christ's Church, and we, too, have a share in the manifestation of His love. We do not need to be brilliant, we do not need to be clever, we do not need to be influential, we do not need to be energetic, we do not need to be anything but quiet, waiting souls, in order to have Christ showing Himself to us, as we toil wearily through the darkness of the night. Undistinguished disciples have a place in His heart, a sphere and a function in His Church, and a share in His revelation of Himself.

III. The last point that I touch is this, that the purpose of this group is significant.

What did they thus get together for? 'Simon Peter saith, I go a fishing. They say, We also go with thee.' So they went back again to their old trade, and they had not left the nets and the boats and the hired servants for ever, as they once thought they had.

What sent them back? Not doubt or despair; because they had seen Jesus Christ up in Jerusalem, and had come down to Galilee at His command on purpose to meet Him. 'There shall ye see Him, lo! I have told you,' was ringing in their ears, and they went back in full confidence of His appearance there. It is very like Peter that he should have been the one to suggest filling an hour of the waiting time with

manual labour. The time would be hanging heavily on his hands. John could have 'sat still in the house,' like Mary, the heart all the busier, because the hands lay quietly in the lap. But that was not Peter's way, and John was ready to keep him company. Peter thought that the best thing they could do, till Jesus chose to come, was to get back to their work, and he was sensible and right. The best preparation for Christ's appearance, and the best attitude to be found in by Him, is doing our daily work, however secular and small it may be. A dirty, wet fishing boat, all slimy with scales, was a strange place in which to wait for the manifestation of a risen Saviour. But it was the right place, righter than if they had been wandering about amongst the fancied sanctities of the synagogues.

They went out to do their work; and to them was fulfilled the old saying, 'I, being in the way, the Lord met me.' Jesus Christ will come to you and me in the street if we carry the waiting heart there, and in the shop, and the factory, and the counting-house, and the kitchen, and the nursery, and the study, or wherever we may be. For all things are sacred when done with a hallowed heart, and He chooses to make Himself known to us amidst the dusty commonplaces of daily life.

He had said to them before the Crucifixion: 'When I sent you forth without purse or scrip, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing.' And then He said, as changing the conditions: 'But now he that hath a purse or scrip, let him take it.' As long as He was with them they were absolved from these common tasks. Now that He had left them the obligation recurred. And the order of things for His servants in all time coming was therein declared to be: no shirking of daily tasks on the plea of wanting divine com-

munications; keep at your work, and if it last all night, stick to it; and if there are no fish in the net, never mind; out with it again. And be sure that sooner or later you will see Him standing on the beach, and hear His voice, and be blessed by His smile.

THE BEACH AND THE SEA

'When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.'—JOHN XXI. 4.

THE incident recorded in this appendix to John's Gospel is separated from the other appearances of our risen Lord in respect of place, time, and purpose. They all occurred in and about Jerusalem; this took place in Galilee. The bulk of them happened on the day of the Resurrection, one of them a week after. This, of course, to allow time for the journey, must have been at a considerably later date. Their object was, mainly, to establish the reality of the Resurrection, the identity of Christ's physical body, and to confirm the faith of the disciples therein. Here, these purposes retreat into the background; the object of this incident is to reveal the permanent relations between the risen Lord and His struggling Church.

The narrative is rich in details which might profitably occupy us, but the whole may be gathered up in two general points of view in considering the revelation which we have here in the participation of Christ in His servants' work, and also the revelation which we have in the preparation by Christ of a meal for His toiling servants. We take this whole narrative thus regarded as our subject on this Easter morning.

1. First we have here a revelation of the permanent

relation of Jesus Christ to His Church and to the individuals who compose it, in this, that the risen Lord on the shore shares in the toil of His servants on the restless sea.

The little group of whom we read in this narrative reminds us of the other group of the first disciples in the first chapter of this Gospel. Four out of the five persons named in our text appear there: Simon Peter, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, James and John. And a very natural inference is that the 'two others' unnamed here are the two others of that chapter, viz. Andrew and Philip. If so, we have at the end, the original little group gathered together again; with the addition of the doubting Thomas.

Be that as it may, there they are on the shore of the sea, and Peter characteristically takes the lead and suggests a course that they all accept: 'I go a fishing.' 'We also go with thee.'

Now we must not read that as if it meant: 'It is all over! Our hopes are vain! We dreamed that we were going to be princes in the Messiah's Kingdom, we have woke up to find that we are only fishermen. Let us go back to our nets and our boats!' No! all these men had seen the risen Lord, and had received from His breath the gift of the Holy Spirit. They had all gone from Jerusalem to Galilee, in obedience to His command, and were now waiting for His promised appearance. Very noble and beautiful is the calm patience with which they fill the time of expectation with doing common and long-abandoned tasks. They go back to the nets and the boats long since forsaken at the Master's bidding. That is not like fanatics. That is not like people who would be liable to the excesses of excitement that would lead to the 'hallucination,'

which is the modern explanation of the resurrection faith, on the part of the disciples.

And it is a precious lesson for us, dear brethren! that whatever may be our memories, and whatever may be our hopes, the very wisest thing we can do is to stick to the common drudgery, and even to go back to abandoned tasks. It stills the pulses. 'Study to be quiet; and to do our own business' is the best remedy for all excitement, whether it be of sorrow or of hope. And not seldom to us, if we will learn and practise that lesson, as to these poor men in the tossing fisherman's boat, the accustomed and daily duties will be the channel through which the presence of the Master will be manifested to us.

So they go, and there follow the incidents which I need not repeat, because we all know them well enough. Only I wish to mark the distinct allusion throughout the whole narrative to the earlier story of the first miraculous draught of fishes which was connected with their call to the Apostleship, and was there by Christ declared to have a symbolical meaning. The correspondences and the contrasts are obvious. The scene is the same; the same green mountains look down upon the same blue waters. It was the same people that were concerned. They were, probably enough, in the same fishing-boat. In both there had been a night of fruitless toil; in both there was the command to let down the net once more; in both obedience was followed by instantaneous and large success.

So much for the likenesses; the contrasts are these. In the one case the Master is in the boat with them, in the other He is on the shore; in the one the net is breaking; in the other, 'though there were so many, yet did it not break.' In the one Peter, smitten by a sense of

his own sinfulness, says, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' In the other, Peter, with a deeper knowledge of his own sinfulness, but also with the sweet knowledge of forgiveness, casts himself into the sea, and flounders through the shallows to reach the Lord. The one is followed by the call to higher duty and to the abandonment of possessions; the other is followed by rest and the mysterious meal on the shore.

That is to say, whilst both of the stories point the lesson of service to the Master, the one of them exhibits the principles of service to Him whilst He was still with them, and the other exhibits the principles of service to Him when He is removed from struggling and toiling on the billows to the calm of the peaceful shore in the morning light.

So we may take that night of toil as full of meaning. Think of them as the darkness fell, and the solemn bulk of the girdling hills lay blacker upon the waters, and the Syrian sky was mirrored with all its stars sparkling in the still lake. All the night long cast after cast was made, and time after time the net was drawn in and nothing in it but tangle and mud. And when the first streak of the morning breaks pale over the Eastern hills they are still so absorbed in their tasks that they do not recognise the voice that hails them from the nearer shore: 'Lads, have ye any neat?' And they answer it with a half surly and wholly disappointed monosyllabic 'No!' It is an emblem for us all; weary and wet, tugging at the oar in the dark, and often seeming to fail. What then? If the last cast has brought nothing, try another. Out with the nets once more! Never mind the darkness, and the cold, and the wetting spray, and the weariness. You cannot expect to be as comfortable in a fishing-

good

Scam

good

boat as in your drawing-room. You cannot expect that your nets will be always full. Failure and disappointment mingle in the most successful lives. Christian work has often to be done with no results at all apparent to the doer, but be sure of this, that they who learn and practise the homely, wholesome virtue of persistent adherence to the task that God sets them, will catch some gleams of a Presence most real and most blessed, and before they die will know that 'their labour has not been in vain in the Lord.' 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.'

And so, finally, about this first part of my subject, there stands out before us here the blessed picture of the Lord Himself, the Risen Lord, with the halo of death and resurrection round about Him; there, on the firm beach, in the increasing light of the morning, interested in, caring about, directing and crowning with His own blessing, the obedient work of His servants.

The simple prose fact of the story, in its plain meaning, is more precious than any 'spiritualising' of it. Take the fact. Jesus Christ, fresh from the grave, who had been down into those dark regions of mystery where the dead sleep and wait, and had come back into this world, and was on the eve of ascending to the Father—this Christ, the possessor of such experience, takes an interest in seven poor men's fishing, and cares to know whether their ragged old net is full or is empty. There never was a more sublime and wonderful binding together of the loftiest and the lowliest than in that question in the mouth of the Risen Lord. If men had been going to dream about what would be fitting language for a risen Saviour, if we had to do here with a legend, and not with a piece of plain, prosaic fact, do you think that the imagination would

ever have entered the mind of the legend-maker to put such a question as that into such lips at such a time? 'Lads, have ye any meat?'

It teaches us that anything that interests us is not without interest to Christ. Anything that is big enough to occupy our thoughts and our efforts is large enough to be taken into His. All our ignoble toils, and all our petty anxieties, touch a chord that vibrates in that deep and tender heart. Though other sympathy may be unable to come down to the minutenesses of our little lives, and to wind itself into the narrow room in which our histories are prisoned, Christ's sympathy can steal into the narrowest cranny. The risen Lord is interested in our poor fishing and our disappointments.

And not only that, here is a promise for us, a prophecy for us, of certain guidance and direction, if only we will come to Him and acknowledge our dependence upon Him. The question that was put to them, 'Lads, have ye any meat?' was meant to evoke the answer, 'No!' The consciousness of my failure is the pre-requisite to my appeal to Him to prosper my work. And just as before He would, on the other margin of that same shore, multiply the loaves and the fishes, He put to them the question, 'How many have ye?' that they might know clearly the inadequacy of their own resources for the hungry crowd, so here, in order to prepare their hearts for the reception of His guidance and His blessing, He provides that they be brought to catalogue and confess their failures. So He does with us all, beats the self-confidence out of us, blessed be His name! and makes us know ourselves to be empty in order that He may pour Himself into us, and flood us with the joy of His presence.

Then comes the guidance given. We may be sure that it is given to us all to-day, if we wait upon Him and ask Him. 'Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.' His command is followed by swift, unanswering, unquestioning obedience, which in its turn is immediately succeeded by the large blessing which the Master then gave on the instant, which He gives still, though often, in equal love and unquestioned wisdom, it comes long after faith has discerned His presence and obedience has bowed to His command.

It may be that we shall not see the results of our toil till the morning dawns and the great net is drawn to land by angel hands. But we may be sure that while we are toiling on the tossing sea, He watches from the shore, is interested in all our weary efforts, will guide us if we own to Him our weakness, and will give us to see at last issues greater than we had dared to hope from our poor service. The dying martyr looked up and saw Him 'standing at the right hand of God,' in the attitude of interested watchfulness and ready help. This Easter morning bids us lift our eyes to a risen Lord who 'has not left us to serve alone,' nor gone up on high, like some careless general to a safe height, while his forsaken soldiers have to stand the shock of onset without him. From this height He bends down and 'covers our heads in the day of battle.' 'He was received up,' says the Evangelist, 'and sat on the right hand of God, and they went forth and preached everywhere.' Strange contrast between His throned rest and their wandering toils for Him! But the contrast gives place to a deeper identity of work and condition, as the Gospel goes on to say, 'The Lord also *working with them* and confirming the word with signs following.'

Though we be on the tossing sea and He on the quiet

shore, between us there is a true union and communion. His heart is with us, if our hearts be with Him, and from Him will pass over all strength, grace, and blessing to us, if only we know His presence, and owning our weakness, obey His command and expect His blessing.

II. Look at the other half of this incident before us. I pass over the episode of the recognition of Jesus by John, and of Peter struggling to His feet, interesting as it is, in order to fix upon the central thought of the second part of the narrative, viz. the risen Lord on the shore, in the increasing light of the morning, 'preparing a table' for His toiling servants. That 'fire of coals' and the simple refreshment that was being dressed upon it had been prepared there by Christ's own hand. We are not told that there was anything miraculous about it. He had gathered the charcoal; He had procured the fish; He had dressed it and prepared it. They are bidden to 'bring of the fish they had caught'; He accepts their service, and adds the result of their toil, as it would seem, to the provision which His own hand has prepared. He summons them to a meal, not the mid-day repast, for it was still early morning. They seat themselves, smitten by a great awe. The meal goes on in silence. No word is spoken on either side. Their hearts know Him. He waits on them, making Himself their Servant as well as their Host. He 'taketh bread and giveth them and fish likewise,' as He had done in the miracles by the same shore and on that sad night in the upper room that seemed so far away now, and in the roadside inn at Emmaus, when something in His manner or action disclosed Him to the wondering two at the table.

Now what does all that teach us? Two things; and

first—neglecting for a moment the difference between shore and sea—here we have the fact of Christ's providing, even by doing menial offices, for His servants.

These seven men were wet and weary, cold and hungry. The first thing they wanted when they came out of the fishing-boat was their breakfast. If they had been at home, their wives and children would have got it ready for them. Jesus had a great deal to say to them that day, a great deal to teach them, much to do for them, and for the whole world, by the words that followed; but the first thing that He thinks about is to feed them. And so, cherishing no overstrained contempt for material necessities and temporal mercies, let us remember that it is His hand that feeds us still, and let us be glad to think that this Christ, risen from the dead and with His heart full of the large blessings that He was going to bestow, yet paused to consider: 'They are coming on shore after a night's hard toil, they will be faint and weary; let Me feed their bodies before I begin to deal with their hearts and spirits.'

Scene

And He will take care of you, brother! and of us all. The 'bread will be given' us, at any rate, and 'the water made sure.' It was a modest meal that He with His infinite resources thought enough for toiling fishermen. 'One fish,' as the original shows us, 'one loaf of bread.' No more! He could as easily have spread a sumptuous table for them. There is no covenant for superfluities, necessities will be given. Let us bring down our wishes to His gifts and promises, and recognise the fact that 'he who needs least is the nearest the gods,' and he that needs least is surest of getting from Christ what he needs.

But then, besides that, the supply of all other deeper and loftier necessities is here guaranteed. The symbol-

ism of our text divides, necessarily, the two things which in fact are not divided. It is not all toiling on the restless sea here, any more than it is all rest and fruition yonder; but all that your spirit needs, for wisdom, patience, heroism, righteousness, growth, Christ will give you in your work; and that is better than giving it to you after your work, and the very work which is blessed by Him, and furthered and prospered by Him, the very work itself will come to be meat and nourishment. 'Out of the eater will come forth meat,' and the slain 'lions' of past struggles and sorrows, the next time we come to them, will be 'full of honey.'

Finally, there is a great symbolical prophecy here if we emphasise the distinction between the night and the morning, between the shore and the sea. We can scarcely fail to catch this meaning in the incident which sets forth the old blessed assurance that the risen Lord is preparing a feast on the shore while His servants are toiling on the darkling sea.

All the details, such as the solid shore in contrast with the changeful sea, the increasing morning in contrast with the toilsome night, the feast prepared, have been from of old consecrated to shadow forth the differences between earth and heaven. It would be blindness not to see here a prophecy of the glad hour when Christ shall welcome to their stable home, amid the brightness of unsetting day, the souls that have served Him amidst the fluctuations and storms of life, and seen Him in its darkness, and shall satisfy all their desires with the 'bread of heaven.'

Our poor work which He deigns to accept forms part of the feast which is spread at the end of our toil, when 'there shall be no more sea.' He adds the results

of our toil to the feast which He has prepared. The consequences of what we have done here on earth make no small part of the blessedness of heaven.

‘Their works and alms and all their good endeavour
Stayed not behind, nor in the grave were trod.’

The souls which a Paul or a John has won for the Master, in their vocation as ‘fishers of men,’ are their ‘hope and joy and crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus.’ The great benediction which the Spirit bade the Apocalyptic seer write over ‘the dead which die in the Lord,’ is anticipated in both its parts by this mysterious meal on the beach. ‘They rest from their labours’ inasmuch as they find the food prepared for them, and sit down to partake; ‘Their works do follow them’ inasmuch as they ‘bring of the fish which they have caught.’

Finally, Christ Himself waits on them, therein fulfilling in symbol what He has told us in great words that dimly shadow wonders unintelligible until experienced: ‘Verily I say unto you, He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth, and serve them.’

So here is a vision to cheer us all. Life must be full of toil and of failure. We are on the midnight sea, and have to tug, weary and wet, at a heavy oar, and to haul an often empty net. But we do not labour alone. He comes to us across the storm, and is with us in the night, a most real, because unseen Presence. If we accept the guidance of His directing word, His indwelling Spirit, and His all-sufficient example, and seek to ascertain His will in outward Providences, we shall not be left to waste our strength in blunders, nor shall our labour be in vain. In the morning light we shall

see Him standing serene on the steadfast shore. The 'Pilot of the Galilean lake' will guide our frail boat through the wild surf that marks the breaking of the sea of life on the shore of eternity; and when the sun rises over the Eastern hills we shall land on the solid beach, bringing our 'few small fishes' with us, which He will accept. And there we shall rest, nor need to ask who He is that serves us, for we shall know that 'It is the Lord!'

'IT IS THE LORD!'

'Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, *It is the Lord.*'—JOHN xxi. 7.

It seems a very strange thing that these disciples had not, at an earlier period of this incident, discovered the presence of Christ, inasmuch as the whole was so manifestly a repetition of that former event by which the commencement of their ministry had been signalled, when He called them to become 'fishers of men.' We are apt to suppose that when once again they embarked on the lake, and went back to their old trade, it must have been with many a thought of Him busy at their hearts. Yonder—perhaps we fancy them thinking—is the very point where we saw Him coming out of the shadows of the mountains, that night when He walked on the water; yonder is the little patch of grass where He made them all sit down whilst we bore the bread to them: there is the very spot where we were mending our nets when He came up to us and called us to Himself; and now it is all over. We have loved and lost Him; He has been with us, and has left us. 'We trusted that it

had been He who should have redeemed Israel,' and the Cross has ended it all! So, we are apt to think, they must have spoken; but there does not seem to have been about them any such sentimental remembrance. John takes pains in this narrative, I think, to show them to us as plain, rough men, busy about their night's work, and thinking a great deal more of their want of success in fishing, than about the old associations which we are apt to put into their minds. Then through the darkness He comes, as they had seen Him come once before, when they know Him not; and He speaks to them as He had spoken before, and they do not detect His voice yet; and He repeats the old miracle, and their eyes are all holden, excepting the eyes of him who loved, and he first says, 'It is the Lord!' Now, besides all the other features of this incident by which it becomes the revelation of the Lord's presence with His Church, and the exhibition of the work of the Church during all the course of the world's history, it contains valuable lessons on other points, such as these which I shall try to bring before you.

Now and always, as in that morning twilight on the Galilean lake, Christ comes to men. Everywhere He is present, everywhere revealing Himself. Now, as then, our eyes are 'holden' by our own fault, so that we recognise not the merciful Presence which is all around us. Now, as then, it is they who are nearest to Christ by love who see Him first. Now, as then, they who are nearest to Him by love, are so because He loves them, and because they know and believe the love which He has to them. I find, then, in this part of the story three thoughts,—First, they only see aright who see Christ in everything. Secondly,

they only see Christ who love Him. Lastly, they only love Him who know that He loves them.

I. First then, they only see aright who see Christ in everything.

This word of John's, 'It is the Lord!'—ought to be the conviction with the light of which we go out to the examination of all events, and to the consideration of all the circumstances of our daily life. We believe that unto Christ is given 'all power in heaven and upon earth.' We believe that to Him belongs creative power—that 'without Him was not anything made which was made.' We believe that from Him came all life at first. In Him life was, as in its deep source. He is the Fountain of life. We believe that as no being comes into existence without His creative power, so none continues to exist without His sustaining energy. We believe that He allots to all men their natural characters and their circumstances. We believe that the history of the world is but the history of His influence, and that the centre of the whole universe is the cross of Calvary. In the light of such convictions, I take it, every man that calls himself a Christian ought to go out to meet life and to study all events. Let me try, then, to put before you, very briefly, one or two of the provinces in which we are to take this conviction as the keynote to all our knowledge.

No man will understand the world aright, to begin with, who cannot say about all creation, 'It is the Lord!' Nature is but the veil of the invisible and ascended Lord: and if we would pierce to the deepest foundations of all being, we cannot stop until we get down to the living power of Christ our Saviour and the Creator of the world, by whom all things were made, and whose will pouring out into this great

universe, is the sustaining principle and the true force which keeps it from nothingness and from quick decay.

Why, what did Christ work all His miracles upon earth for? Not solely to give us a testimony that the Father had sent Him; not solely to make us listen to His words as a Teacher sent from God; not solely as proof of His Messiahship,—but besides all these purposes there was surely this other, that for once He would unveil to us the true Author of all things, and the true Foundation of all being. Christ's miracles interrupted the order of the world, because they made visible to men for once the true and constant Orderer of the order. They interrupted the order in so far as they struck out the intervening links by which the creative and sustaining word of God acts in nature, and suspended each event directly from the firm staple of His will. They revealed the eternal Orderer of that order in that they showed the Incarnate Word wielding the forces of nature, which He has done from of old and still does. We are then to take all these signs and wonders that He wrought, as a perennial revelation of the real state of things with regard to this natural world, and to see in them all, signs and tokens that into every corner and far-off region of the universe His loving hand reaches, and His sustaining power goes forth. Into what province of nature did He not go? He claimed to be the Lord of life by the side of the boy's bier at the gate of Nain, in the chamber of the daughter of Jairus, by the grave of LAZARUS. He asserted for Himself authority over all the powers and functions of our bodily life, when He gave eyes to the blind, hearing to the deaf, feet to the lame. He showed that He was Lord over the fowl of the air, the beasts of the earth, the fish of the sea. And

He asserted His dominion over inanimate nature, when the fig-tree, cursed by Him, withered away to its roots, and the winds and waves sunk into silence at His gentle voice. He let us get a glimpse into the dark regions of His rule over the unseen, when 'with authority He commanded the unclean spirits, and they came out.' And all these things He did, in order that we, walking in this fair world, encompassed by the glories of this wonderful universe, should be delivered from the temptation of thinking that it is separated from Him, or independent of His creative and sustaining power; and in order that we should feel that the continuance of all which surrounds us, the glories of heaven and the loveliness of earth, are as truly owing to the constant intervention of His present will, and the interposition beneath them of His sustaining hand, as when first, by the 'Word of God' who 'was with God and who was God,' speaking forth His fiat, there came light and beauty out of darkness and chaos.

O Christian men! we shall never understand the Christian thought about God's universe, until we are able to say, Preservation is a continual creation; and beneath all the ordinary workings of Nature, as we faithlessly call it, and the apparently dead play of secondary causes, there are welling forth, and energising, the living love and the blessed power of Christ, the Maker, and Monarch, and Sustainer of all. 'It is the Lord!' is the highest teaching of all science. The mystery of the universe, and the meaning of God's world, are shrouded in hopeless obscurity, until we learn to feel that all laws suppose a Lawgiver, and that all working involves a divine energy; and that beneath all which appears there lies for ever rising

up through it and giving it its life and power, the one true living Being, the Father in heaven, the Son by whom He works, and the Holy Ghost the Spirit. Darkness lies on Nature, except to those who in

‘the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky,’

see that Form which these disciples saw in the morning twilight. Let ‘It is the Lord!’ be the word on our lips as we gaze on them all, and nature will then be indeed to us the open secret, the secret of the Lord which ‘He will show to them that fear Him.’

Then again, the same conviction is the only one that is adequate either to explain or to make tolerable the circumstances of our earthly condition. To most men—ah! to all of us in our faithless times—the events that befall ourselves, seem to be one of two things equally horrible, the play of a blind Chance, or the work of an iron Fate. I know not which of these two ghastly thoughts about the circumstances of life is the more depressing, ruining all our energy, depriving us of all our joy, and dragging us down with its weight. But brethren, and friends, there are but these three ways for it—either our life is the subject of a mere chaotic chance; or else it is put into the mill of an iron destiny, which goes grinding on and crushing with its remorseless wheels, regardless of what it grinds up; or else, through it all, in it all, beneath it and above it all, there is the Will which is Love, and the Love which is Christ! Which of these thoughts is the one that commends itself to your own hearts and consciences, and which is the one under which you would fain live if you could? I understand not how a man can front the awful possibilities of a future on earth,

knowing all the points at which he is vulnerable, and all the ways by which disaster may come down upon him, and retain his sanity, unless he believes that all is ruled, not merely by a God far above him, who may be as unsympathising as He is omnipotent, but by his Elder Brother, the Son of God, who showed His heart by all His dealings with us here below, and who loves as tenderly, and sympathises as closely with us as ever He did when on earth He gathered the weary and the sick around Him. Is it not a thing, men and women, worth having, to have this for the settled conviction of your hearts, that Christ is moving all the pulses of your life, and that nothing falls out without the intervention of His presence and the power of His will working through it? Do you not think such a belief would nerve you for difficulty, would lift you buoyantly over trials and depressions, and would set you upon a vantage ground high above all the petty annoyances of life? Tell me, is there any other place where a man can plant his foot and say, 'Now I am on a rock and I care not what comes'? The riddle of Providence is solved, and the discipline of Providence is being accomplished when we have grasped this conviction—All events do serve me, for all circumstances come from His will and pleasure, which is love; and everywhere I go—be it in the darkness of disaster or in the sunshine of prosperity—I shall see standing before me that familiar and beloved Shape, and shall be able to say, 'It is the Lord!' Friends and brethren, that is the faith to live by, that is the faith to die by; and without it life is a mockery and a misery.

Once more this same conviction, 'It is the Lord' should guide us in all our thoughts about the history

and destinies of mankind and of Christ's Church. The Cross is the centre of the world's history, the incarnation and the crucifixion of our Lord are the pivot round which all the events of the ages revolve. 'The testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy,' and the growing power of Jesus is the spirit of history, and in every book that calls itself the history of a nation, unless there be written, whether literally or in spirit, this for its motto, 'It is the Lord!' all will be shallow and incomplete.

'They that went before and they that came after,' when He entered into the holy city in His brief moment of acceptance and pomp, surrounded Him with hosannas and jubilant gladness. It is a deep and true symbol of the whole history of the world. All the generations that went before Him, though they knew it not, were preparing the way of the Lord, and heralding the advent of Him who was 'the desire of all nations' and the light of men'; and all the generations that come after, though they know it not, are swelling the pomp of His triumph and hastening the time of His crowning and dominion. 'It is the Lord!' is the secret of all national existence. It is the secret of all the events of the world. The tangled web of human history is only then intelligible when that is taken as its clue, 'From Him are all things, and to Him are all things.' The ocean from which the stream of history flows, and that into which it empties itself, are one. He began it, He sustains it. 'The help that is done upon earth He doeth it Himself,' and when all is finished, it will be found that all things have indeed come from Christ, been sustained and directed by Christ, and have tended to the glory and exaltation of that Redeemer, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, Maker of the worlds,

and before whose throne are for ever gathered for service, whether they know it or not, the forces of the Gentiles, the riches of the nations, the events of history, the fates and destinies of every man.

I need not dwell upon the way in which such a conviction as this, my friends, living and working in our hearts, would change for us the whole aspect of life, and make everything bright and beautiful, blessed and calm, strengthening us for all which we might have to do, nerving us for duty, and sustaining us against every trial, leading us on, triumphant and glad, through regions all sparkling with tokens of His presence and signs of His love, unto His throne at last, to lay down our praises and our crowns before Him. Only let me leave with you this one word of earnest entreaty, that you will lay to heart the solemn alternative—either see Christ in everything, and be blessed; or miss Him, and be miserable. Oh! it is a waste, weary world, unless it is filled with signs of His presence. It is a dreary seventy years, brother, of pilgrimage and strife, unless, as you travel along the road, you see the marks that He who went before you has left by the wayside for your guidance and your sustenance. If you want your days to be true, noble, holy, happy, manly, and Godlike, believe us, it is only when they all have flowing through them this conviction, 'It is the Lord!' that they all become so.

II. Then, secondly, only they who love, see Christ.

John, the Apostle of Love, knew Him first. In religious matters, love is the foundation of knowledge. There is no way of knowing a Person except love. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of Christ are not to be won by the exercise of the understanding. A man cannot argue his way into knowing Christ.

No skill in drawing inferences will avail him there. The treasures of wisdom—earthly wisdom—are all powerless in that region. Man's understanding and natural capacity—let it keep itself within its own limits and region, and it is strong and good; but in the region of acquaintance with God and Christ, the wisdom of this world is foolishness, and man's understanding is not the organ by which he can know Christ. Oh no! there is a better way than that: 'He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.' As it is, in feebler measure, with regard to our personal acquaintance with one another, where it is not so much the power of the understanding, or the quickness of the perception, or the talent and genius of a man, that make the foundation of his knowledge of his friend, as the force of his sympathy and the depth of his affection; so—with the necessary modification arising from the transference from earthly acquaintances to the great Friend and Lover of our souls in heaven—so is it with regard to our knowledge of Christ. Love will trace Him everywhere, as dear friends can detect each other in little marks which are meaningless to others. Love's quick eye pierces through disguises impenetrable to a colder scrutiny. Love has in it a longing for His presence which makes us eager and quick to mark the lightest sign that He for whom it longs is near, as the footstep of some dear one is heard by the sharp ear of affection long before any sound breaks the silence to those around. Love leads to likeness to the Lord, and that likeness makes the clearer vision of the Lord possible. Love to Him strips from our eyes the film that self and sin, sense and custom, have drawn over them. It is these which hide Him from us. It is because men are so indifferent

to, so forgetful of, their best Friend that they fail to behold Him. 'It is the Lord!' is written large and plain on all things, but like the great letters on a map, they are so obvious and fill so wide a space, that they are not seen. They who love Him know Him, and they who know Him love Him. The true eye-salve for our blinded eyes is applied when we have turned with our hearts to Christ. The simple might of faithful love opens them to behold a more glorious vision than the mountain 'full of chariots of fire,' which once flamed before the prophet's servant of old—even the august and ever-present form of the Lord of life, the Lord of history, the Lord of providence. When they who love Jesus turn to see 'the Voice that speaks with them,' they ever behold the Son of Man in His glory; and where others see but the dim beach and a mysterious stranger, it is to their lips that the glad cry first comes, 'It is the Lord!'

And is it not a blessed thing, brethren! that thus this high and glorious prerogative of recognising the marks of Christ's presence everywhere, of going through life gladdened by the assurance of His nearness, does not depend on what belongs to few men only, but on what may belong to all? When we say that 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called'—when we say that love is the means of knowledge—we are but in other words saying that the way is open to all, and that no characteristics belonging to classes, no powers that must obviously always belong to but a handful, are necessary for the full apprehension of the power and blessedness of Christ's Gospel. The freeness and the fullness of that divine message, the glorious truth that it is for all men, and is offered to all, are couched in that grand

principle, Love that thou mayest know; love, and thou art filled with the fullness of God. Not for the handful, not for the *élite* of the world; not for the few, but for the many; not for the wise, but for all; not for classes, but for humanity—for all that are weak, and sinful, and needy, and foolish, and darkened. He comes, who only needs that the heart that looks should love, and then it shall behold!

But if that were the whole that I have to say, I should have said but little to the purpose. It very little avails to tell men to love. We cannot love to order, or because we think it duty. There is but one way of loving, and that is to see the lovely. The disciple who loved Jesus was 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' Generalise that, and it teaches us this, that

III. They love who know that Christ loves them. His divine and eternal mercy is the foundation of the whole. Our love, brethren, can never be anything else than our echo to His voice of tenderness than the reflected light upon our hearts of the full glory of His affection. No man loveth God except the man who has first learned that God loves him. 'We love Him, because He first loved us.' And when we say, 'Love Christ,' if we could not go on to say, 'Nay, rather let Christ's love come down upon you'—we had said worse than nothing. The fountain that rises in my heart can only spring up heavenward, because the water of it has flowed down into my heart from the higher level. All love must descend first, before it can ascend. We have, then, no Gospel to preach, if we have only this to preach, 'Love, and thou art saved.' But we have a Gospel that is worth the preaching, when we can come to men who have no love in their hearts, and say, 'Brethren! listen to this—you have

to bring nothing, you are called upon to originate no affection; you have nothing to do but simply to receive the everlasting love of God in Christ His Son, which was without us, which began before us, which flows forth independent of us, which is unchecked by all our sins, which triumphs over all our transgressions, and which will make us—loveless, selfish, hardened, sinful men—soft, and tender, and full of divine affection, by the communication of its own self.'

Oh, then, look to Christ, that you may love Him! Think, brethren, of that full, and free, and boundless mercy which, from eternity, has been pouring itself out in floods of grace and loving-kindness over all creatures. Think of that everlasting love which presided at the foundation of the earth, and has sustained it ever since. Think of that Saviour who has died for us, and lives for us. Think of Christ, the heart of God, and the fullness of the Father's mercy; and do not think of yourselves at all. Do not ask yourselves, to begin with, the question, Do I love Him or do I not? You will never love by that means. If a man is cold, let him go to the fire and warm himself. If he is dark, let him stand in the sunshine, and he will be light. If his heart is all clogged and clotted with sin and selfishness, let him get under the influence of the love of Christ, and look away from himself and his own feelings, towards that Saviour whose love shed abroad is the sole means of kindling ours. You have to go down deeper than *your* feelings, *your* affections, *your* desires, *your* character. There you will find no resting-place, no consolation, no power. Dig down to the living Rock, Christ and His infinite love to you, and let *it* be the strong foundation, built into which you and your love may become living stones, a holy temple,

partaking of the firmness and nature of that on which it rests. They that love do so because they know that Christ loves them; and they that love see Him everywhere; and they that see Him everywhere are blessed for evermore. And let no man here torture himself, or limit the fullness of this message that we preach, by questionings whether Christ loves Him or not. Are you a man? are you sinful? have you broken God's law? do you need a Saviour? Then put away all these questions, and believe that Christ's personal love is streaming out for the whole world, and that there is a share for you if you like to take it and be blessed!

There is one last thought arising from the whole subject before us, that may be worth mention before I close. Did you ever notice how this whole incident might be turned, by a symbolical application, to the hour of death, and the vision which may meet us when we come thither? It admits of the application, and perhaps was intended to receive the application, of such a symbolic reference. The morning is dawning, the grey of night going away, the lake is still; and yonder, standing on the shore, in the uncertain light, there is one dim Figure, and one disciple catches a sight of Him, and another casts himself into the water, and they find 'a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread,' and Christ gathers them around His table, and they all know that 'It is the Lord!' It is what the death of the Christian man, who has gone through life recognising Christ everywhere, may well become:—the morning breaking, and the finished work, and the Figure standing on the quiet beach, so that the last plunge into the cold flood that yet separates us, will not be taken with trembling reluctance; but, drawn to Him by the love beaming out of His face, and

upheld by the power of His beckoning presence, we shall struggle through the latest wave that parts us, and scarcely feel its chill, nor know that we *have* crossed it; till falling blessed at His feet, we see, by the nearer and clearer vision of His face, that this is indeed heaven. And looking back upon 'the sea that brought us thither,' we shall behold its waters flashing in the light of that everlasting morning, and hear them breaking in music upon the eternal shore. And then, brethren, when all the weary night-watchers on the stormy ocean of life are gathered together around Him who watched with them from His throne on the bordering mountains of eternity, where the day shines for ever—then He will seat them at His table in His kingdom, and none will need to ask, 'Who art Thou?' or 'Where am I?' for all shall know that 'It is the Lord!' and the full, perfect, unchangeable vision of His blessed face will be heaven!

'LOVEST THOU ME?'

'Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs.'—JOHN xxi. 15.

PETER had already seen the risen Lord. There had been that interview on Easter morning, on which the seal of sacred secrecy was impressed; when, alone, the denier poured out his heart to his Lord, and was taken to the heart that he had wounded. Then there had been two interviews on the two successive Sundays in which the Apostle, in common with his brethren, had received, as one of the group, the Lord's benediction, the Lord's gift of the Spirit, and the Lord's commission. But something more was needed; there had

been public denial, there must be public confession. If he had slipped again into the circle of the disciples, with no special treatment or reference to his fall, it might have seemed a trivial fault to others, and even to himself. And so, after that strange meal on the beach, we have this exquisitely beautiful and deeply instructive incident of the special treatment needed by the denier before he could be publicly reinstated in his office.

The meal seems to have passed in silence. That awe which hung over the disciples in all their intercourse with Jesus during the forty days, lay heavy on them, and they sat there, huddled round the fire, eating silently the meal which Christ had provided, and no doubt gazing silently at the silent Lord. What a tension of expectation there must have been as to how the oppressive silence was to be broken! and how Peter's heart must have throbbed, and the others' ears been pricked up, when it was broken by 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?' We may listen with pricked-up ears too. For we have here, in Christ's treatment of the Apostle, a revelation of how He behaves to a soul conscious of its fault; and in Peter's demeanour an illustration of how a soul, conscious of its fault, should behave to Him.

There are three stages here: the threefold question, the threefold answer, and the threefold charge. Let us look at these.

I. The threefold question.

The reiteration in the interrogation did not express doubt as to the veracity of the answer, nor dissatisfaction with its terms; but it did express, and was meant, I suppose, to suggest to Peter and to the others, that the threefold denial needed to be obliterated by the threefold confession; and that every black mark that

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had been scored deep on the page by that denial needed to be covered over with the gilding or bright colouring of the triple acknowledgment. And so Peter thrice having said, 'I know Him not!' Jesus with a gracious violence forced him to say thrice, 'Thou knowest that I love Thee.' The same intention to compel Peter to go back upon his past comes out in two things besides the triple form of the question. [The one is the designation by which he is addressed, 'Simon, son of Jonas,' which travels back, as it were, to the time before he was a disciple, and points a finger to his weak humanity before it had come under the influence of Jesus Christ.] 'Simon, son of Jonas,' was the name that he bore in the days before his discipleship. It was the name by which Jesus had addressed him, therefore, on that never-to-be-forgotten turning-point of his life, when he was first brought to Him by his brother Andrew. It was the name by which Jesus had addressed him at the very climax of his past life when, high up, he had been able to see far, and in answer to the Lord's question, had rung out the confession: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!' So the name by which Jesus addresses him now says to him in effect: 'Remember thy human weakness; remember how thou wert drawn to Me; remember the high-water mark of thy discipleship, when I was plain before thee as the Son of God, and remembering all these, answer Me—lovest thou Me?'

* [The same intention to drive Peter back to the wholesome remembrance of a stained past is obvious in the first form of the question. Our Lord mercifully does not persist in giving to it that form in the second and third instances: 'Lovest thou Me more than these?' More than these, what? I cannot for a moment

believe that that question means something so trivial and irrelevant as 'Lovest thou Me more than these nets, and boats, and the fishing?' No; in accordance with the purpose that runs through the whole, of compelling Peter to retrospect, it says to him, 'Do you remember what you said a dozen hours before you denied Me, "Though all should forsake Thee, yet will not I"? Are you going to take that stand again? Lovest thou Me more than these, that never discredited their boasting so shamefully?'

So, dear brethren! here we have Jesus Christ, in His treatment of this penitent and half-restored soul, forcing a man, with merciful compulsion, to look steadfastly and long at his past sin, and to retrace step by step, shameful stage by shameful stage, the road by which he had departed so far. Every foul place he is to stop and look at, and think about. Each detail he has to bring up before his mind. Was it not cruel of Jesus thus to take Peter by the neck, as it were, and hold him right down, close to the foul things that he had done, and say to him, 'Look! look! look ever! and answer, Lovest thou Me?' No; it was not cruel; it was true kindness. Peter had never been so abundantly and permanently penetrated by the sense of the sinfulness of his sin, as after he was sure, as he had been made sure in that great interview, that it was all forgiven. So long as a man is disturbed by the dread of consequences, so long as he is doubtful as to his relation to the forgiving Love, he is not in a position beneficially and sanely to consider his evil in its moral quality only. But when the conviction comes to a man, 'God is pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done'; and when he can look at his own evil without the smallest disturbance rising

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from slavish fear of issues, then he is in a position rightly to estimate its darkness and its depth. And there can be no better discipline for us all than to remember our faults, and penitently to travel back over the road of our sins, just because we are sure that God in Christ has forgotten them. The beginning of Christ's merciful treatment of the forgiven man is to compel him to remember, that he may learn and be ashamed.

And then there is another point here, in this triple question. How significant and beautiful it is that the only thing that Jesus Christ cares to ask about is the sinner's love! We might have expected: 'Simon, son of Jonas, are you sorry for what you did? Simon, son of Jonas, will you promise never to do the like any more?' No! These things will come if the other thing is there. 'Lovest thou Me?' Jesus Christ sues each of us, not for obedience primarily, not for repentance, not for vows, not for conduct, but for a heart; and that being given, all the rest will follow. That is the distinguishing characteristic of Christian morality, that Jesus seeks first for the surrender of the affections, and believes, and is warranted in the belief, that if these are surrendered, all else will follow; and love being given, loyalty and service and repentance and hatred of self-will and of self-seeking will follow in her train. All the graces of human character which Christ seeks, and is ready to impart, are, as it were, but the pages and ministers of the regal Love, who follow behind and swell the *cortège* of her servants.

Christ asks for love. Surely that indicates the depth of His own! In this commerce He is satisfied with nothing less, and can ask for nothing more; and He

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Excellent

seeks for love because He is love, and has given love. Oh! to all hearts burdened, as all our hearts ought to be—unless the burden has been cast off in one way—by the consciousness of our own weakness and imperfection, surely, surely, it is a gospel that is contained in that one question addressed to a man who had gone far astray, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou?' *excellent*

Here, again, we have Jesus Christ, in His dealing with the penitent, willing to trust discredited professions. We think that one of the signs of our being wise people is that experience shall have taught us 'once' being 'bit, twice' to be 'shy,' and if a man has once deceived us by flaming professions and ice-cold acts, never to trust him any more. And we think that is 'worldly wisdom,' and 'the bitter fruit of earthly experience,' and 'sharpness,' and 'shrewdness,' and so forth. Jesus Christ, even whilst reminding Peter, by that 'more than these,' of his utterly hollow and unreliable boasting, shows Himself ready to accept once again the words of one whose unveracity He had proved. 'Charity hopeth all things, believeth all things,' and Jesus Christ is ready to trust us when we say, 'I love Thee,' even though often in the past our professed love has been all disproved. *note*

We have here, in this question, our Lord revealing Himself as willing to accept the imperfect love which a disciple can offer Him. Of course, many of you well know that there is a very remarkable play of expression here. In the two first questions the word which our Lord employs for 'love' is not the same as that which appears in Peter's two first answers. Christ asks for one kind of love; Peter proffers another. I do not enter upon discussion as to the distinction

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 between these two apparent synonyms. The kind of love which Christ asks for is higher, nobler, less emotional, and more associated with the whole mind and will. It is the inferior kind, the more warm, more sensuous, more passionate and emotional, which Peter brings. And then, in the third question, our Lord, as it were, surrenders and takes Peter's own word, as if He had said, 'Be it so! You shrink from professing the higher kind; I will take the lower; and I will educate and bring that up to the height that I desire you to stand at.' Ah, brother! however stained and imperfect, however disproved by denials, however tainted by earthly associations, Jesus Christ will accept the poor stream of love, though it be but a trickle when it ought to be a torrent, which we can bring Him.

These are the lessons which it seems to me lie in this triple question. I have dealt with them at the greater length, because those which follow are largely dependent upon them. But let me turn now briefly, in the second place, to—

II. The triple answer.

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 'Yea, Lord! Thou knowest that I love Thee.' Is not that beautiful, that the man who by Christ's Resurrection, as the last of the answers shows, had been led to the loftiest conception of Christ's omniscience, and regarded Him as knowing the hearts of all men, should, in the face of all that Jesus Christ knew about his denial and his sin, have dared to appeal to Christ's own knowledge? What a superb and all-conquering confidence in Christ's depth of knowledge and forgivingness of knowledge that answer showed! He felt that Jesus could look beneath the surface of his sin, and see that below it there was, even in the midst

of the denial, a heart that in its depths was true. It is a tremendous piece of confident appeal to the deeper knowledge, and therefore the larger love and more abundant forgiveness, of the righteous Lord—'Thou knowest that I love Thee.'

Brethren! a Christian man ought to be sure of his love to Jesus Christ. You do not study your conduct in order to infer from it your love to others. You do not study your conduct in order to infer from it your love to your wife, or your husband, or your parents, or your children, or your friend. Love is not a matter of inference; it is a matter of consciousness and intuition. And whilst self-examination is needful for us all for many reasons, a Christian man ought to be as sure that he loves Jesus Christ as he is sure that he loves his dearest upon earth.

It used to be the fashion long ago—this generation has not depth enough to keep up the fashion—for Christian people to talk as if it were a point they longed to know, whether they loved Jesus Christ or not. There is no reason why it should be a point we long to know. You know all about your love to one another, and you are sure about that. Why are you not sure about your love to Jesus Christ? 'Oh! but, you say, 'look at my sins and failures'; and if Peter had looked only at his sins, do you not think that his words would have stuck in his throat? He did look, but he looked in a very different way from that of trying to ascertain from his conduct whether he loved Jesus Christ or not. Brethren, any sin is inconsistent with Christian love to Christ. Thank God, we have no right to say of any sin that it is incompatible with that love! More than that; a great, gross, flagrant, sudden fall like Peter's is a great deal less inconsistent with

love to Christ than are the continuously unworthy, worldly, selfish, Christ-forgetting lives of hosts of complacent professing Christians to-day. White ants will eat up the carcase of a dead buffalo quicker than a lion will. And to have denied Christ once, twice, thrice, in the space of an hour, and under strong temptation, is not half so bad as to call Him 'Master' and 'Lord,' and day by day, week in, week out, in works to deny Him. The triple answer declares to us that in spite of a man's sins he ought to be conscious of his love, and be ready to profess it when need is.

III. Lastly, we have here the triple commission.

I do not dwell upon it at any length, because in its original form it applies especially to the Apostolic office. But the general principles which underlie this three-fold charge, to feed and to tend both 'the sheep' and 'the lambs,' may be put in a form that applies to each of us, and it is this—the best token of a Christian's love to Jesus Christ is his service of man for Christ's sake.

* 'Lovest thou Me?' 'Yea! Lord.' Thou hast said; go and do, 'Feed My lambs; feed My sheep.' We need the profession of words; we need, as Peter himself enjoined at a subsequent time, to be ready to 'give to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope,' and an acknowledgment of the love, that are in us. But if you want men to believe in your love, however Jesus Christ may know it, go and work in the Master's vineyard. The service of man is the garb of the love of God. 'He that loveth God will love his brother also.' Do not confine that thought of service, and feeding, and tending, to what we call evangelistic and religious work. That is one of its forms, but it is only one of them. Everything in which Christian men can serve their fellows is to be taken by them as their worship of

their Lord, and is taken by the world as the convincing proof of the reality of their love.

Love to Jesus Christ is the qualification for all such service. If we are knit to Him by true affection, which is based upon our consciousness of our own falls and evils, and our reception of His forgiving mercy, then we shall have the qualities that fit us, and the impulse that drives us, to serve and help our fellows. I do not say—God forbid!—that there is no philanthropy apart from Christian faith, but I do say that, on the wide scale, and in the long run, they who are knit to Jesus Christ by love will be those who render the greatest help to all that are 'afflicted in mind, body, or estate', and that the true basis and qualification for efficient service of our fellows is the utter surrender of our hearts to Him who is the Fountain of love, and from whom comes all our power to live in the world, as the images and embodiments of the love which has saved us that we might help to save others.

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Brethren! let us all ask ourselves Christ's question to the denier. Let us look our past evils full in the face, that we may learn to hate them, and that we may learn more the width and the sweep of the power of His pardoning mercy. God grant that we may all be able to say, 'Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!'

YOUTH AND AGE, AND THE COMMAND FOR BOTH

Annual Sermon to the Young

'... When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. . . . And when He had spoken this He saith unto him, Follow Me.'—JOHN xxi. 18, 19.

THE immediate reference of these words is, of course, to the martyrdom of the Apostle Peter. Our Lord contrasts the vigorous and somewhat self-willed youth and the mellowed old age of His servant, and shadows forth his death, in bonds, by violence. And then He bids him, notwithstanding this prospect of the issue of his faithfulness, 'Follow Me.'

Now I venture, though with some hesitation, to give these words a slightly different application. I see in them two pictures of youth and of old age, and a commandment based upon both. You young people are often exhorted to a Christian life on the ground of the possible approach of death. I would not undervalue that motive, but I seek now to urge the same thing upon you from a directly opposite consideration, the probability that many of you will live to be old. All the chief reasons for our being Christians are of the same force, whether we are to die to-night, or to live for a century. So in my text I wish you to note what you are now; what, if you live, you are sure to become; and what, in the view of both stages, you will be wise to do. 'When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and wentest whither thou wouldest. When thou shalt be old another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.' Therefore, 'Follow Me.'

I. So, then, note the picture here of what you are.

Most of you young people are but little accustomed to reflect upon yourselves, or upon the special characteristics and prerogatives of your time of life. But it will do you no harm to think for a minute or two of what these characteristics are, that you may know your blessings, and that you may shun the dangers which attach to them.

‘When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself.’ *There* is a picture easily translated, and significant of much. The act of girding implies preparation for action, and may be widened out to express that most blessed prerogative of youth, the cherishing of bright imaginations of its future activity and course. The dreams of youth are often laughed at, but if a young man or woman be faithful to them they are the prophecies of the future, and are given in order that at the opening of the flower nature may put forth her power; and so we may be able to live through many a dreary hour in the future. Only, seeing that you do live so much in rich fore-shadowings and fair anticipations of the times that are to come, take care that you do not waste that divine faculty, the freshness of which is granted to you as a morning gift, the ‘dew of your youth.’ See that you do not waste it in anticipations which cling like mist to the low levels of life, but that you lift it higher and embrace worthy objects. It is good that you should anticipate, that you should live by hope. It is good that you should be drawn onwards by bright visions, whether they be ever fulfilled or no. But there are dangers in the exercise, and dreaming with some of you takes the place of realising your dreams, and you build for yourselves fair fabrics in imagination which you never take one step to accomplish and make real.

Be not the slaves and fools of your imaginations, but cultivate the faculty of hoping largely; for the possibilities of human life are elastic, and no man or woman, in their most sanguine, early anticipations, if only these be directed to the one real good, has ever exhausted or attained the possibilities open to every soul.

Again, girding *one's self* implies independent self-reliance, and that is a gift and a stewardship given (as all gifts are stewardships) to the young. We all fancy, in our early days, that we are going to build 'towers that will reach to heaven.' Now *we* have come, and we will show people how to do it! The past generations have failed, but ours is full of brighter promise. There is something very touching, to us older men almost tragical, in the unbounded self-confidence of the young life that we see rushing to the front all round us. We know so well the disillusion that is sure to come, the disappointments that will cloud the morning sky. We would not carry one shadow from the darkened experience of middle life into the roseate tints of the morning. The 'vision splendid'

' Will fade away
Into the light of common day,'

soon enough. But for the present this self-reliant confidence is one of the blessings of your early days.

Only remember, it is dangerous, too. It may become want of reverence, which is ruinous, or presumption and rashness. Remember what a cynical head of a college said, 'None of us is infallible, not even the youngest,' and blend modesty with confidence, and yet be buoyant and strong, and trust in the power that may make you strong. And then your self-confidence will not be rashness.

'Thou wentest whither thou wouldest.' That is another characteristic of youth, after it has got beyond the schoolboy stage. Your own will tends to become your guide. For one thing, at your time of life, most other inward guides are comparatively weak. You have but little experience. Most of you have not cultivated largely the habit of patient reflection, and thinking twice before you act once. That comes: it would not be good that it should be over-predominant in you. 'Old heads on young shoulders' are always monstrosities, and it is all right that, in your early days, you should largely live by impulse, if only, as well as a will, there be a conscience at work which will do instead of the bitter experience which comes to guide some of the older of us.

Again, yours is the age when passion is strong. I speak now especially to young men. Restraints are removed for many of you. There are dozens of young men listening to me now, away from their father's home, separated from the purifying influence of sisters and of family life, living in solitary lodgings, at liberty to spend their evenings where they choose, and nobody be a bit the wiser. Ah, my dear young friend! 'thou wentest whither thou wouldest' and thou wouldest whither thou oughtest not to go.

There is nothing more dangerous than getting into the habit of saying, 'I do as I like,' however you cover it over. Some of you say, 'I indulge natural inclinations; I am young; a man must have his fling. Let me sow my wild oats in a quiet corner, where nobody will see the crop coming up; and when I get to be as old as you are, I will do as you do; young men will be young men,' etc., etc. You know all that sort of talk. Take this for a certain fact: that whoever puts the reins

into the charge of his own will when he is young, has put the reins *and the whip* into hands which will drive over the precipice.

My friend! 'I will' is no word for you. There is a far diviner and better one than that—'I ought.' Have you learnt that? Do you yield to that sovereign imperative, and say, 'I *must*, because I *ought* and, therefore, I *will*'? Bow passion to reason, reason to conscience, conscience to God—and then, be as strong in the will and as stiff in the neck as ever you choose; but only then. So much, then, for my first picture.

II. Now let me ask you to turn with me for a moment to the second one—What you will certainly become if you live.

I have already explained that putting this meaning on the latter portion of our first verse is somewhat forcing it from its original signification. And yet it is so little of violence that the whole of the language naturally lends itself to make a picture of the difference between the two stages of life.

All the bright visions that dance before your youthful mind will fade away. We begin by thinking that we are going to build temples, or 'towers that shall reach to heaven,' and when we get into middle life we have to say to ourselves: 'Well! I have scarcely material enough to carry out the large design that I had. I think that I will content myself with building a little hovel, that I may live in, and perhaps it will keep the weather off me.' Hopes diminish; dreams vanish; limited realities take their place, and we are willing to hold out our hands and let some one else take the responsibilities that we were so eager to lay upon ourselves at the first. Strength will fade away. 'Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall

utterly fail.' Physical weariness, weakness, the longing for rest, the consciousness of ever-narrowed and narrowing powers, will come to you, and if you grow up to be old men, which it is probable that many of you will do, you will have to sit and watch the tide of your life ebb, ebb, ebbing away moment by moment.

Self-will will be wonderfully broken, for there are far stronger forces that determine a man's life than his own wishes and will. We are like swimmers in the surf of the Indian Ocean, powerless against the battering of the wave which pitches us, for all our science, and for all our muscle, where it will. Call it environment, call it fate, call it circumstances, call it providence, call it God—there is something outside of us bigger than we are, and the man who begins life, thinking 'Thus I will, thus I command, let my determination stand instead of all other reason'; has to say at last, 'I could not do what I wanted. I had to be content to do what I could.' Thus our self-will gets largely broken down; and patient acceptance of the inevitable comes to be the wisdom and peace of the old man.

And, last of all, the picture shows us an irresistible approximation to an unwelcome goal: 'Another shall carry thee whither thou wouldest not.'

Life to the old seems to you to be so empty and ashen grey that you wonder they care to live. But life to them, for all its disappointments, its weariness, its foiled efforts, its vanished hopes, its departed companions, is yet life, and most of them cling to it like a miser to his gold. But yet, like a man sucked into Niagara above the falls, they are borne on the irresistible, smooth flood, nearer and nearer to the edge of the rock, and they hear the mighty sound in their ears

long before they reach the place where the plunge is to be taken from sunshine into darkness and foam.

So 'when thou shalt be old' your fancy will be gone, your physical strength will be gone, your freshness will be gone, your faculty of hoping will work feebly and have little to work on; on earth your sense of power will be humbled, and yet you will not want to be borne to the place whither you must be borne.

Fancy two portraits, one of a little chubby boy in child's dress, with a round face and clustering curls and smooth cheeks and red lips, and another of an old man, with wearied eyes, and thin locks, and wrinkled cheeks, and a bowed frame. The difference between the two is but the symbol of the profounder differences that separate the two selves, which yet are the one self—the impetuous, self-reliant, self-willed, hopeful, buoyant youth, and the weary, feeble, broken, old man. And that is what you will come to, if you live, as sure as I am speaking to you, and you are listening to me.

III. And now, lastly, what in the view of both these stages it is wise for you to do.

'When He had spoken thus, He saith unto him, Follow Me.' What do we mean by following Christ? We mean submission to His authority. 'Follow Me' as Captain, Commander, absolute Lawgiver, and Lord. We mean imitation of His example. These two words include all human duty, and promise to every man perfection if he obeys. 'Follow Me'—it is enough, more than enough, to make a man complete and blessed. We mean choosing and keeping close to Him, as Companion as well as Leader and Lord. No man or woman will ever be solitary, though friends may go, and associates may change, and companions may leave them, and life may

become empty and dreary as far as human sympathy is concerned—no man or woman will ever be solitary if stepping in Christ's footsteps, close at His heels, and realising His presence.

But you cannot follow Him, and He has no right to tell you to follow Him, unless He is something more and other to you than Example, and Commander, and Companion. What business has Jesus Christ to demand that a man should go after Him to the death? Only this business, that He has gone to the death for the man. You must follow Christ first, my friend, by coming to Him as a sinful creature, and finding your whole salvation and all your hope in humble reliance on the merit of His death. Then you may follow Him in obedience, and imitation, and glad communion.

That being understood, I would press upon you this thought, that such a following of Jesus Christ will preserve for you all that is blessed in the characteristics of your youth, and will prevent them from becoming evil. He will give you a basis for your hopes and fulfil your most sanguine dreams, if these are based on His promises, and their realisation sought in the path of His feet. As Isaiah prophesies, 'the mirage shall become a pool.' That which else is an illusion, dancing ahead and deceiving thirsty travellers into the belief that sand is water, shall become to you really 'pools of water,' if your hopes are fixed on Jesus Christ. If you follow Him, your strength will not ebb away with shrunken sinews and enfeebled muscles. If you trust Christ, your self-will will be elevated by submission, and become strong to control your rebellious nature, because it is humble to submit to His supreme command. And if you trust and follow Jesus Christ, your

hope will be buoyant, and bright, and blessed, and prolong its buoyancy, and brightness, and blessedness into 'old age, when others fade.' If you will follow Christ your old age will, if you reach it, be saved from the bitterest pangs that afflict the aged, and will be brightened by future possibilities. There will be no need for lingering laments over past blessings, no need for shrinking reluctance to take the inevitable step. An old age of peaceful, serene brightness caught from the nearer gleam of the approaching heaven, and quiet as the evenings in the late autumn, not without a touch of frost, perhaps, but yet kindly and fruitful, may be ours. And instead of shrinking from the end, if we follow Jesus, we shall put our hands quietly and trustfully into His, as a little child does into its mother's soft, warm palm, and shall not ask whither He leads, assured that since it is He who leads we shall be led aright.

Dear young friends! 'Follow Me!' is Christ's merciful invitation to you. You will never again be so likely to obey it as you are now. Well begun is half ended. 'I would have you innocent of much transgression.' You need Him to keep you in the slippery ways of youth. You could not go into some of those haunts, where some of you have been, if you thought to yourselves, 'Am I following Jesus as I cross this wicked threshold?' You may never have another message of mercy brought to your ears. If you do become a religious man in later life, you will be laying up for yourselves seeds of remorse and sorrow, and in some cases memories of pollution and filth, that will trouble you all your days. 'To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

'THEY ALSO SERVE WHO ONLY STAND AND WAIT'

'Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.'—JOHN xxi. 21, 22.

WE have seen in a former sermon that the charge of the risen Christ to Peter, which immediately precedes these verses, allotted to him service and suffering. The closing words of that charge 'Follow Me!' had a deep significance, as uniting both parts of his task in the one supreme command of imitation of his Master.

But the same words had also a simpler meaning, as inviting the Apostle to come apart with Christ at the moment, for some further token of His love or indication of His will. Peter follows; but in following, naturally turns to see what the little group, sitting silent there by the coal fire on the beach, may be doing, and he notices John coming towards them, with intent to join them.

What emboldened John to thrust himself, uncalled for, into so secret an interview? The words in which he is described in the context answer the question. 'He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, which also leaned on His breast at Supper, and said, Lord! which is he that betrayeth Thee?' He was also bound by close ties to Peter. So with the familiarity of 'perfect love which casteth out fear,' he felt that the Master could have no secrets from him, and no charge to give to his friend which he might not share.

Peter's swift question, 'Lord! and what shall this man do?' though it has been often blamed, does not

seem very blameworthy. There was perhaps a little touch of his old vivacity in it, indicating that he had not been sufficiently subdued and sobered by the prospect which Christ had held out to him; but far more than that there was a natural interest in his friend's fate, and something of a wish to have his company on the path which he was to tread. Christ's answer, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me!' gently rebukes any leaven of evil that there may have been in the question; warns him against trying to force other people into his groove; with solemn emphasis reiterates his own duty; and, in effect, bids him let his brother alone, and see that he himself discharges the ministry which he has received of the Lord.

The enigmatical words of Christ, and the long life of the Apostle, which seemed to explain them, naturally bred an interpretation of them in the Early Church which is recorded here, as I believe, by the Evangelist himself, to the effect that John, like another Enoch at the beginning of a new world, was to escape the common lot. And very beautiful is the quiet way in which the Evangelist put that error on one side, by the simple repetition of his Master's words, emphasising their hypothetical form and their enigmatical character: 'Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but *if* I will that he *tarry* till I come, what is that to thee?'

Now all this, I think, is full of lessons. Let me try to draw one or two of them briefly now.

I. First, then, we have in that majestic 'If I will!' the revelation of the risen Christ as the Lord of life and death.

In His charge to Peter, Christ had asserted His right absolutely to control His servant's conduct and fix

his place in the world, and His power to foresee and forecast his destiny and his end. But in these words He goes a step further. '*I will that he tarry*'; to communicate life and to sustain life is a divine prerogative; to act by the bare utterance of His will upon physical nature is a divine prerogative. Jesus Christ here claims that His will goes out with sovereign power amongst the perplexities of human history and into the depths of that mystery of life; and that He, the Son of Man, '*quickeneth whom He will*,' and has power '*to kill and to make alive*.' The words would be absurd, if not something worse, upon any but divine lips, that opened with conscious authority, and whose Utterer knew that His hand was laid upon the innermost springs of being.

So, in this entirely incidental fashion, you have one of the strongest and plainest instances of the quiet, unostentatious and habitual manner in which Jesus Christ claimed for Himself properly divine prerogatives.

Remember that He who thus spoke was standing before these seven men there, in the morning light, on the beach, fresh from the grave. His resurrection had proved Him to be the Lord of death. He had bound it to His chariot-wheels as a Conqueror. He had risen and He stood there before them with no more mark of the corruption of the grave upon Him than there are traces of the foul water in which a sea bird may have floated, on its white wing that flashes in the sunshine as it soars. And surely as these men looked to Christ, '*declared to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection from the dead*,' they may have begun, however '*foolish and slow of heart*' they were '*to believe*,' to understand that '*to this end Christ both died and*

rose and revived, that He might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living,' both of death and of life.

These two Apostles' later history was full of proofs that Christ's claim was valid. Peter is shut up in prison and delivered once, at the very last moment, when hope was almost dead, in order that he might understand that when he was put into another prison and *not* delivered, the blow of martyrdom fell upon him, not because of the strength of his persecutors, but because of the will of his Lord. And John had to see his brother James, to whom he had been so closely knit, with whom he had pledged himself to drink the cup that Christ drank of, whom he had desired to have associated with himself in the special honours in the Messianic Kingdom—he had to see him slain, first of the Apostles, while he himself lingered here long after all his early associates were gone. He had, no doubt, many a longing to depart. Solitary, surrounded by a new world, pressed by many cares, he must often have felt that the cross which he had to carry was no lighter than that laid on those who had passed to their rest by martyrdom. To him it would often be martyrdom to live. His personal longing is heard for a moment in the last words of the Apocalypse, 'Amen! even so, come, Lord Jesus!'—but undoubtedly for the most part he stayed his heart on his Lord's will, and waited in meek patience till he heard the welcome announcement, 'The Master is come and calleth for thee.'

And, dear friends! that same belief that the risen Christ is the Lord of life and death, is the only one that can stay our hearts, or make us bow with submission to His divine will. He who has conquered death by undergoing it is death's Lord as well as ours,

and when He wills to bring His friends home to Himself, saith to that black-robed servant, 'Go, and he goeth; do this and he doeth it.' The vision which John saw long after this on another shore, washed by a stormier sea, spoke the same truth as does this majestic 'I will'—'He that liveth and became dead and is alive for evermore,' is by virtue of His divine eternal life, and has become in His humanity by virtue of His death and resurrection the Lord of life and death. The hands that were nailed to the Cross turn the keys of death and Hades. 'He openeth and no man shutteth; He shutteth and no man openeth.'

II. We have here before us, in this incident, the service of patient waiting.

'If I will that he tarry, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.' Peter is the man of action, not great at reflection; full of impulse, restless until his hands can do something to express his thoughts and his emotions. On the very Mount of Transfiguration he wanted to set to work and build 'three tabernacles,' instead of listening awed to the divine colloquy. In Galilee he cannot wait quietly for his Master to come, but must propose to his friends to 'go a fishing.' In the fishing-boat, as soon as he sees the Lord he must struggle through the sea to get at Him; whilst John sits quiet in the boat, blessed in the consciousness of his Master's presence and in silently gazing at Him verily there. All through the first part of the Acts of the Apostles his bold energy goes flashing and flaming. It is always his voice that rings out in the front, whether preaching on the Pentecost Day, bringing healing to the sick, or fronting the Sanhedrim. His element is in the shock of conflict and the strain of work.

John, on the other hand, seldom appears in the

narrative. When he does so he stands a silent figure by the side of Peter, and disappears from it altogether before very long. We do not hear that he did anything. He seems to have had no part in the missionary work of the Church.

He 'tarried,' that was all. The word is the same—'abide'—which is so often upon his lips in his Gospel and in his Epistles, as expressive of the innermost experience of the Christian soul, the condition of all fruitfulness, blessedness, knowledge and Christ-likeness. Christ's charge to John to 'tarry' did not only, as his brethren misinterpreted it, mean that his life was to be continued, but it prescribed the manner of his life. It was to be patient contemplation, a 'dwelling in the house of the Lord,' a keeping of his heart still, like some little tarn up amongst the silent hills, for heaven with all its blue to mirror itself in.

And that quiet life of contemplation bore its fruit. In his meditation the deeds and words of his Master slowly grew ever more and more luminous to him. Deeper meanings came out, revealing new constellations, as he gazed into that opening heaven of memory. He reaped 'the harvest of a quiet eye' and garnered the sheaves of it in his Gospel, the holy of holies of the New Testament; and in his Epistles, in which he proclaims the first and last word of revelation, 'God is love'—the pure diamond that hangs at the end of the golden chain let down from Heaven. Often, no doubt, his brethren thought him 'but an idler in the land,' but at last his 'tarrying' was vindicated.

Now, dear brethren! in all times of the world's history that form of Christian service needs to be pressed upon busy people. And there never was a time in the world's history, or in the Church's history

when it more needed to be pressed upon the ordinary Christian man than at this day. The good and the bad of our present Christianity, and of our present social life, conspire to make people think that those who are not at work in some external form of Christian service for the good of their fellows are necessarily idlers. Many of them are so, but by no means all, and there is always the danger that the external work which good, earnest people do shall become greater than can be wholesomely and safely done by them without their constant recourse to this solitary meditation, and to tarrying before God.

The stress and bustle of our everyday life; the feverish desire for immediate results; the awakened conviction that Christianity is nothing if not practical; the new sense of responsibility for the condition of our fellows; the large increase of all sorts of domestic, evangelistic, and missionary work among all churches in this day—things to be profoundly thankful for, like all other good things have their possible dangers; and it is laid on my heart to warn you of these now. For the sake of our own personal hold on Jesus Christ, for the sake of our progress in the knowledge of His truth, and for the sake of the very work which some of us count so precious, there is need that we shall betake ourselves to that still communion. The stream that is to water half a continent must rise high in the lonely hills, and be fed by many a mountain rill in the solitude, and the men who are to keep the freshness of their Christian zeal, and of the consecration which they will ever feel is being worn away by the attrition even of faithful service, can only renew and refresh it by resorting again to the Master, and imitating Him who prepared Himself for a day of teaching in the

Temple by a night of communion on the Mount of Olives.

Further, there is here a lesson of tolerance for us all. Practical men are always disposed, as I said, to force everybody else into their groove. Martha is always disposed to think that Mary is idle when she is 'sitting at Christ's feet,' and wants to have her come into the kitchen and help her there. The eye which sees must not say to the hand which toils, nor the hand to the eye, 'I have no need of thee.' There are men who cannot think much; there are men who cannot work much. There are men whom God has chosen for diligent external service; there are men whom God has chosen for solitary retired musing; and we cannot dispense with either the one or the other. Did not John Bunyan do more for the world when he was shut up in Bedford Gaol and dreamed his dream than by all his tramping about Bedfordshire, preaching to a handful of cottagers? And has not the Christian literature of the prison, which includes three at least of Paul's Epistles, proved of the greatest service and most precious value to the Church?

We need all to listen to the voice which says, 'Come ye apart by yourselves into a solitary place, and rest awhile.' Work is good, but the foundation of work is better. Activity is good, but the life which is the basis of activity is even more. There is plenty of so-called Christian work to-day which I fear me is not life but mechanism; has slipped off its original foundations, and is, therefore, powerless. Let us tolerate the forms of service least like our own, not seek to force other men into our paths nor seek to imitate them. Let Peter flame in the van, and beard high priests, and stir and fight; and let John sit in his quiet home, caring

for his Lord's mother, and holding fellowship with his Lord's Spirit.

III. Lastly, we have here the lesson of patient acquiescence in Christ's undisclosed will.

The error into which the brethren of the Apostle fell as to the meaning of the Lord's words was a very natural one, especially when taken with the commentary which John's unusually protracted life seemed to append to it. We know that that belief lingered long after the death of the Apostle; and that legends, like the stories that are found in many nations of heroes that have disappeared, but are sleeping in some mountain recess, clustered round John's grave; over which the earth was for many a century believed to heave and fall with his gentle breathing.

John did not know exactly what his Master meant. He would not venture upon a counter-interpretation. Perhaps his brethren were right, he does not know; perhaps they were wrong, he does not know. One thing he is quite sure of, that what his Master said was: '*If I will that he tarry.*' And he acquiesces quietly in the certainty that it shall be as his Master wills; and, in the uncertainty what that will is, he says in effect: 'I do not know, and it does not much matter. If I am to go to find Him, well! If He is to come to find me, well again! Whichever way it be, I know that the patient tarrying here will lead to a closer communion hereafter, and so I leave it all in His hands.'

Dear brethren! that is a blessed state that you and I may come to; a state of quiet submission, not of indifference but of acquiescence in the undisclosed will of our loving Christ about all matters, and about this alternative of life or death amongst the rest. The

soul that has had communion with Jesus Christ amidst the imperfections here will be able to refer all the mysteries and problems of its future to Him with unshaken confidence. For union with Him carries with it the assurance of its own perpetuity, and 'in its sweetness yieldeth proof that it was born for immortality.' The Psalmist learned to say, 'Thou shalt afterward receive me to glory,' because he could say, 'I am continually with Thee.' And in like manner we may all rise from the experience of the present to confidence in that immortal future. Death with his 'abhorred shears' cuts other close ties, but their edge turns on the knot that binds the soul to its Saviour. He who has felt the power of communion with the ever-living Christ cannot but feel that such union must be for ever, and that because Christ lives, and as long as Christ lives, he will live also.

Therefore, to the soul thus abiding in Christ that alternative of life or death which looms so large to us when we have not Christ with us, will dwindle down into very small dimensions. If I live there will be work for me to do here, and His love to possess; if I die there will be work for me to do there too, and His love to possess in still more abundant measure. So it will not be difficult for such a soul to leave the decision of this as of all other things with the Lord of life and death, and to lie acquiescent in His gracious hands. That calm acceptance of His will and patience with Christ's 'If' is the reward of tarrying in silent communion with Him.

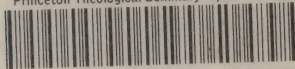
My dear friend! has death to you dwindled to a very little thing? Can you say that you are quite sure that it will not touch your truest self? Are you able to leave the alternative in His hands, content with His

decision and content with the uncertainty that wraps
His decision? Can you say,

'Lord! It belongs not to my care,
Whether I die or live'?

The answer to these questions is involved in the answer to the other:—Have you trusted your sinful soul for salvation to Jesus Christ, and are you drawing from Him a life which bears fruit in glad service and in patient communion? Then it will not much matter whether you are in heaven or on earth, for in both places and states the essence of your life will be the same, your Companion one, and your work identical. If it be 'Christ' for me to live it will be 'gain' for me to die.

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